NMC launches pre-engineering course focused on CAD, 3D printing. PAGE 2
Labor participates in W-2 CM Workshop in preparation for tax season. PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

$1

2 DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 255

www.saipantribune.com | MONDAY DECEMBER 23, 2024 | www.facebook.com/saipantribune

Seasonal Korean charter flights underway

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The CNMI has launched seasonal charter flights thanks to the collaborative effort between E-Land Group and local tourism stakeholders.

E-Land, in collaboration with Hana Tour and Leaders Travel, announced the start of seasonal charter flights operating between Busan, South Korea and Saipan.

The flights, which started last Friday, Dec. 20, will run through until Feb. 25, 2025. The flight will operate twice a week on Wednesdays and Sundays. E-Lands says this strategic partnership aims to boost accessibility and drive tourism growth for both destinations.

Dennis Seo, speaking on behalf of E-Land, highlighted the initiative's broad impact on the local economy and tourism.

"While our partner hotels include Kensington Hotel Saipan, Pacific Islands Club (PIC) Saipan, and Coral Ocean Resort Saipan, the charter flights will also allow us to

See KOREAN on Page 4

Sablan resigns as senior policy advisory

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Senior policy advisor and special assistant for Climate Policy & Planning Tina Sablan has officially resigned from her post effective this week. According to Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, while it's saddening to see a friend and colleague leave, he looks forward to her future endeavors.

Sablan, who has served the CNMI in various capacities through the years, shared in a statement to *Saipan Tribune* last Friday that she will be leaving her post as a Cabinet member effective Dec. 27.

Sablan

Specifically, Sablan will be stepping down from her role as the governor's senior policy advisor and special assistant for Climate Policy & Planning.

See SABLAN on Page 4

Kilili: Musk, Trump kill CNMI's inclusion in grant funds for Federal Employment Service

Sablan

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
delatorreferdie@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) said over the weekend that his multi-year effort to make the CNMI eligible for Wagner-Peyser Act grant funds was killed by Elon Musk and President-elect Donald Trump on Wednesday.

Sablan said in his *e-kilili* newsletter that the Wagner-Peyser funds help train job-seekers and connect them

See KILILI on Page 4

TOYS FOR TOTS RACQUEL FLOYD
The Marine Toys for Tots Foundation's Toy for Tots Campaign on Saipan was concluded with their last beneficiary, the Division of Youth Services at the Division Youth Center, Thursday afternoon. In the photo, sixth from left, is Saipan Chamber of Commerce director Kimberly Camacho with officers from U.S. Marine Corps Camp Blas and Division of Youth Services director Vivian Sablan and her staff.

Police classify hit-and-run case as pedestrian error

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

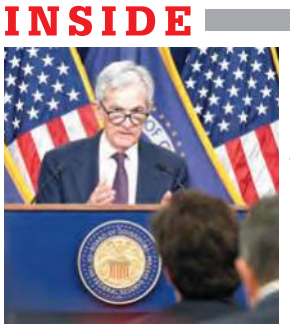
A hit-and-run case that resulted in one fatality last week Sunday has since been classified as pedestrian error, according to the Department of Public Safety.

Hayag

DPS assistant chief of police and acting public information officer Simon T. Manacop confirmed last Friday that upon

See POLICE on Page 4

INSIDE



BUSINESS
For small businesses, the biggest change in the new year will be the arrival of a presumably more business-friendly administration in Washington. But there are other shifts owners should keep on their radar.
PAGE 9

WORLD
A Ukrainian attack Friday on a town in Russia's Kursk border region using U.S.-supplied missiles killed six people, including a child, a senior local official said.
PAGE 10

LIFE & STYLE
The Christmas tradition has become nearly global in scope: Children from around the world track Santa Claus as he sweeps across the earth, delivering presents and defying time.
PAGE 11

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SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

NMC launches pre-engineering course focused on CAD, 3D printing

Northern Marianas College recently launched its new pre-engineering course, an engaging and hands-on program designed to introduce students to cutting-edge Computer-Aided Design tools and 3D printing technology. This course develops student's technical skills while exploring the vast possibilities within engineering and design fields. Throughout the course, students were introduced to foundational CAD software to design and produce 3D-printed final projects. The final products featured a range of shapes and designs—from snowmen and chess rooks to an innovative computer attachment engineered to hold papers conveniently alongside a computer screen (many of the faculty present during the presentations expressed interest in purchasing this design).

MARIANAS ADVENTURE CAMPAIGN WINNERS MVA

First place winner Patricia Castillon (@_chuchai), center, and other winners of the Marianas Visitors Authority's #MarianasAdventure Campaign are awarded for their winning Instagram videos promoting the destination on Dec. 16, 2024, at the MVA Office in I Liyan, Saipan, in The Marianas. From left, MVA Marketing specialists Brenda Repeki and Skye Seo, third place winner Deejay Santomin (@swwfctr), Castillon, second place winner Antonette Castro a.k.a. Netty Cee (#nettyceeofficial), MVA Media Marketing specialist Ezra Lizama, and MVA Marketing manager Thomas Kim.

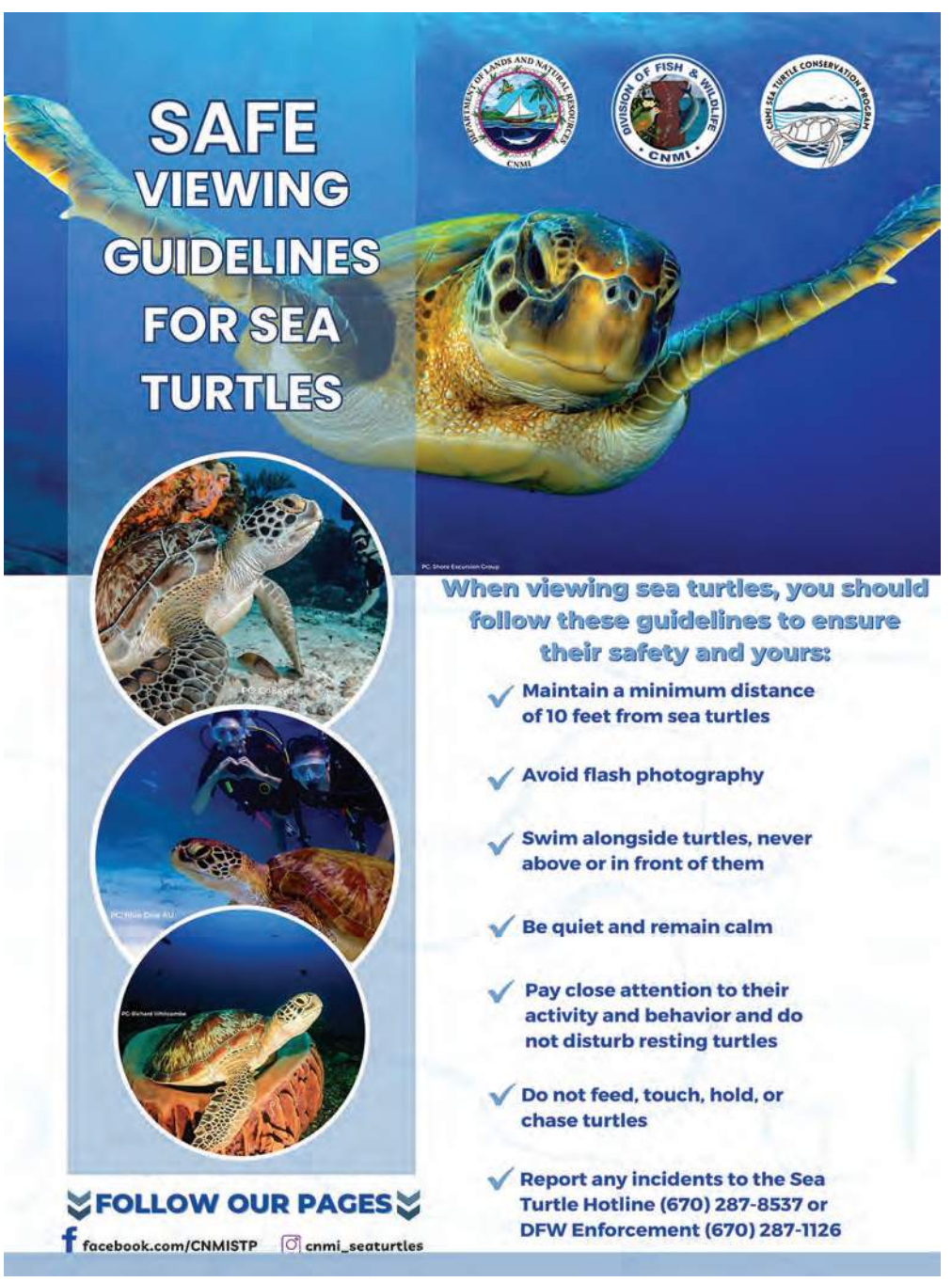
NMC

Henry Hofschneider San Nicolas Jr., a Northern Marianas College pre-engineering student, explains his 3D printed project to his classmates. The course is part of NMC's pre-engineering program, which is part of the College's broader initiative to equip students with the skills and experience needed for future careers in STEM fields.

"This course not only empowers students with practical skills in CAD and 3D printing but also inspires them to envision the limitless possibilities within engineering and design. It's exciting to see their creativity come to life through tangible projects," said Velma C. Deleon Guerrero, Science, Math, Health and Athletics Department chairwoman. "We're proud to be laying a foundation for the future engineers, architects, and innovators of our community."

The course also provided a platform for students to discuss their professional aspirations in the field of engineering. Ambitions ranged from becoming mechanical and civil engineers to pursuing careers as Formula 1 race car engineers and architects. This pre-engineering course is part of NMC's broader initiative to equip students with the skills and experience needed for future careers in STEM fields.

For more information about the pre-engineering program or other opportunities at Northern Marianas College, visit www.marianas.edu or contact Velma Deleon Guerrero at velma.deleon.guerrrero@marianas.edu. ***(PR)***


SAFE
VIEWING
GUIDELINES
FOR SEA
TURTLES
When viewing sea turtles, you should follow these guidelines to ensure their safety and yours:
Maintain a minimum distance of 10 feet from sea turtles
Avoid flash photography
Swim alongside turtles, never above or in front of them
Be quiet and remain calm
Pay close attention to their activity and behavior and do not disturb resting turtles
Do not feed, touch, hold, or chase turtles
Report any incidents to the Sea Turtle Hotline (670) 287-8537 or DFW Enforcement (670) 287-1126
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E-Mail Address: cpa.admin@pticom.com • Website: www.cnmiports.com

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 01-2025

Opening date: December 16, 2024 **Closing date: January 03, 2025**

Location: SAIPAN		**SALARY**
Position(s):	(1) AOA Controller-I	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)
	(1) General Maintenance-I	PL 3/1 ($8.01/hr. or $16,655.51/annum)
Location: TINIAN		**SALARY**
Position(s):	(1) AOA Controller/Ground Maintenance-I	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)
	(1) General Maintenance-II	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)
	(1) Tariff Technician-I	PL 4/1 ($8.41/hr. or $17,488.29/annum)
Location: ROTA		**SALARY**
Position(s):	(1) Ports Police/ARFF Trainee	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr.)
	(1) General Maintenance-II	PL 5/1 ($8.83/hr. or $18,362.70/annum)

Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original copy of recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 11-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. All applications and required documents must be submitted to the ***CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor Arrival Building, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or CPA Administration Office, Tinian International Airport, or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport.*** Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. Certain vacancies may require written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, 10-year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. The deadline for submission of applications and required documents to the CPA Administration Office (Saipan) or at the Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport is no later than **5:00 P.M. on Friday, January 03, 2025.**

Detailed information on qualifications and position descriptions for the above positions may be picked up along with the application form from Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., except on holidays and austerity, at the CPA Administration Office (2nd Floor) of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Arrival Terminal or CPA Admin, Office at the Tinian International Airport or at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport. For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at lorna.robert@cnmiports.com and hrspecialist@cnmiports.com or by phone at (670)237-6500.

CPA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and CPA hires those who are legally entitled to employment in the CNMI.

FREDERICK A. PANGELINAN
Acting Executive Director

Labor participates in W-2 CM Workshop in preparation for tax season

On Dec. 17, 2024, the Division of Tax and Revenue hosted a comprehensive W-2 CM workshop at the Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center, bringing together employers, tax professionals, and community members to discuss critical tax laws and filing requirements. The event provided valuable insights into the completion of W-2 CM forms and offered a unique opportunity for attendees to engage directly with DRT and Department of Labor representatives.

The workshop featured informative sessions led by DRT experts, who covered essential topics including the latest tax laws, filing requirements, and best practices for completing W-2 CM forms. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions and address their concerns, fostering an interactive environment that promoted understanding and compliance. In addition to the DRT's presentation, representatives from the Department of Labor provided crucial information regarding Box C and Box F of the W-2 form. DOL staff clarified common misconceptions and ensured that employers are well-equipped to accurately report employee information, both on employee tax forms and in their quarterly Census of Employment submissions to the DOL.

The Department of Labor also re-introduced their updated website, demonstrating how to navigate its features effectively. Participants learned about the resources available online, including the Census of Employment and Workforce Plan forms, which are essential for understanding workforce dynamics and planning for future employment needs.

The DRT and the Department of Labor are dedicated to supporting employers and employees alike, ensuring that everyone has access to the information they need to succeed. The workshop concluded with a networking session, allowing attendees to connect with one another and share best practices.

For more information about future workshops and resources available through the Department of Labor, visit www.labor.cnmi.gov or contact (670) 664-3196 or info@do.gov.mp. ***(PR)***

4-H LEAD FACILITATOR

Rownel Jody Coloma has been selected as the lead facilitator for the 2025 National 4-H Conference. A 2024 graduate of the Northern Marianas College, Coloma will play a key role in shaping the conference's curriculum, guiding sessions, mentoring the next generation of leaders, and fostering a dynamic learning environment that will elevate the impact of 4-H nationwide. Coloma has served as a member of 4-H Marianas from August 2021 to June 2023, most notable serving as the organization's State Council President from August 2022 to June 2023, representing the CNMI, providing guidance and support to council members, overseeing program development, managing budgets, and fostering collaboration with state and island advisors. Additionally, Coloma spent his term advocating for youth, mentored council members, cultivated relationships with adult mentors, and worked to secure resources to enhance youth programs, ensuring opportunities for personal growth and community engagement. This is a significant achievement that recognizes Coloma's leadership and dedication to youth development. 4-H Marianas is a non-profit organization with a mission aimed to provide youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to grow as leaders and become self-directing, productive, and contributing members of the Marianas. **NMC**

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) NMHC IFB 2025-003

(This ad is paid by NMHC by HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME: January 10, 2025, 2:00 p.m.

Purchase of Two (2) Preowned Pick Up Trucks

The bid package will be available on December 16, 2024, at the NMHC website at www.nmhcgov.net by clicking on the "Procurement Tab".

The provisions of the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

For any inquiries regarding this bid shall be submitted to Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer via email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net or facsimile at (670)234-9021, on or before December 27, 2024, no later than 10 a.m.

/s/ ZENIE P. MAFNAS
Corporate Director

/s/ MERCED "MARCIE" M. TOMOKANE
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

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Website: www.cnmiports.com

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS

FRANCISCO C. ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
RUNWAY REHABILITATION REPACKAGING PROJECT
PROJECT NO. CPA-SA-004-20 (AIP PENDING)

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS
FOR
SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT FACILITATOR

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is seeking statements of qualifications from qualified and experienced firms (individually or collectively) to provide professional consulting services for Safety Risk Management (SRM) facilitation support, in conjunction with the upcoming Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport Runway Rehabilitation Repackaging Project, No. CPA-SA-004-20 (AIP pending).

The project is being funded by U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the RFQ package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater, CPA's CIP Administrator, at wprater@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this solicitation must be submitted to Ms. Wendi L. Prater via the email address above or may be hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, Friday, December 13, 2024.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their statements of professional qualifications no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2024.** It is preferable that statements of qualification be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/ LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Date: November 15, 2024

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Sobriety checkpoints set today, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day

The CNMI Department of Public Safety would like to inform the public that DPS will be conducting DUI sobriety checkpoints on the following dates:

Monday, Dec. 23, 2024

The first setup will be on Chalan Pale Arnold Chalan Lau Lau to Gualo Rai, from 7:30pm to 9:15pm.

The second setup will be along Chalan Monsignor Martinez As Lito to Dan Dan, from 9pm to 11:30pm.

Tuesday, Dec. 24, 2024

A simultaneous check point will be set-up along Chalan Pale Arnold Chalan Lau Lau to Gualo Rai, and Beach Road San Jose to Chalan Kanoa, and Beach Road Illiyan to Garapan from 10pm to 12am, Dec. 25, 2024.

The purpose of these scheduled checkpoints is to deter, detect, and apprehend impaired drivers and promote public safety while increasing awareness of the dangers of driving while under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or medication while on the island's roadways.

In addition to these checkpoints, DPS Highway Patrol Division will conduct High Visibility Enforcement, Saturation Patrols, and Speed Enforcement at random locations around the island. ***(PR)***

JKPL closed on Dec. 25, 26

This is to inform the public and our patrons that the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library will be closed on Christmas Day, Wednesday, Dec. 25, 2024. The library will also be closed on Thursday, Dec. 26, 2024, for its end-of-the-year professional development workshop. Normal hours of operation will resume on Friday, Dec. 27, 2024.

Please enjoy your public library's free resources by visiting our website at www.cnmilib.org like/follow JKPL's Facebook page @joetenkiyupubliclibrary, Instagram @joetenkiyupubliclibrary, Tik Tok @jkpl670, Twitter @JoetenKiyu, and Youtube: joeten kiyu public library or visit our website www.cnmilib.org to see the progress and programs JKPL has worked so hard to offer for our community. For more information regarding our activities, please contact JKPL at (670) 235-7322/7318. ***(PR)***

POLICE

From page 1

investigation, the officers have since classified the hit-and-run case as a pedestrian error, with investigators believing that the deceased victim was probably intoxicated.

"Preliminary [investigation] officers believe that the pedestrian was intoxicated, as they observed strong reek of alcohol from the deceased at the hospital. Toxicology [report] is pending."

Manacop said that investigation and given alibis that had proved viable confirmed that the driver was not intoxicated or driving under the influence.

Saipan Tribune discovered the development following the arrest and initial bail hearing of alleged driver, Veben Jose S. Hayag.

The 56-year-old was arrested last Thursday and appeared before NMI Superior Court and Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho for a bail hearing last Friday. The only charges presented against Hayag were for fleeing the scene, a felony under CNMI law from the Commonwealth Vehicle Codes under Accidents 9CMC-6101(a)©.

Prosecution, led by assistant attorney general David Karch for the government, asked that bail be maintained at $10,000 and requested Hayag remain at Department of Corrections. Camacho questioned prosecution on why fleeing the scene was the only charge especially since prosecution said the victim died.

Karch replied that it probably should have been recorded and that the report was most likely the initial observations of the officer writing. Karch continued to emphasize the law considers fleeing the scene of an accident, resulting in an injury or death, still a felony.

The court decided to maintain the bail at $10,000. Hayag was remanded back to the Department of Corrections, until his next appearance in court on Dec. 30 at 10am for a preliminary hearing, and Jan. 13, 2025 at 9am for arraignment. Chief Public Defender Douglas Hartig was appointed to represent Hayag.

Court documents state that on Dec. 15 at 11:20pm DPS Central dispatched Highway Patrol units to a reported auto-pedestrian hit-and-run crash incident along Tun Thomas P. Sablan, San Antonio near Pak Pak Beach. When officer arrived and saw an unresponsive male individual lying face down on the eastbound lane with blood running down his head, DPS officer Vince Igitol located a beige front grill laying on the eastbound lane northwest of the unresponsive male individual.

DPS officer Jaylee Laniyo later arrived at the crash scene and was able to identify the grill similar to that of an old model beige Toyota Highlander. Laniyo saw broken pieces of plastic on the center lane which came from a headlight lens of a vehicle.

The next day officers learned that surveillance footage from Mobil Koblerville captured a Toyota Highlander traveling westbound on Koblerville Road at 11:27pm the night before, and were informed that the Mobil surveillance footage time stamped is ahead four minutes from DPS Central's time. On Dec. 17, 2024, DPS officer Tenta Ordonez arrived at Royal Poker along Thomas P. Sablan Road, San Antonio. Ordonez reviewed the Royal Poker's surveillance footage for Dec. 15, 2024 and observed a beige Toyota Highlander entering Afetnas.

On Dec. 18, 2024, DPS traffic investigator Eric Cepeda and Laniyo reviewed surveillance footage from an auto shop along Koblerville Road and observed the Toyota Highlander traveling southbound on Koblerville Road. The duo also went to Winners Apartment in Afetnas where they observed the surveillance and on the posted time stamp 11:26pm saw the same Highlander traveling eastbound along Afetna Road.

Laniyo was able to identify the car by the same white sticker seen in the previous footage from Koblerville. After extracting additional surveillance from the Koblerville Auto shop, Jin Li Store, and Family Discount Store in Dandan. A police officer met with a worker from the store who owned the residence behind the Family Discount Store. The worker gave permission to enter her residence to look next door. It was there that officers spotted the beige-colored SUV covered in a blue tarp. While at the residence, the store worker pointed out a blue Toyota Tercel traveling northbound on Dandan Road and told officers that the operator for the vehicle was the owner of the property where the Highlander was.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

KOREAN

From page 1

promote travel packages to all hotels in Saipan. We believe this will benefit not only the hospitality sector but also the wider tourism market and local economy," he said.

Seo adds that the initiative underscores E-Land's dedication to fostering a vibrant and resilient tourism industry in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders.

E-Land also notes that Saipan residents can also take advantage of these charter flights and can start booking tickets for the charter flights via Jeju Air's official website.

The charter flights are backed by strong support from the CNMI government and tourism entities.

"E-Land Saipan (Micronesia Resort Incorporation, MRI Saipan) expresses its heartfelt gratitude for the substantial support provided by the NMI government enabling the launch of seasonal charter flights this winter. This collaboration would not have been possible without the assistance and dedication of the government, the Marianas Visitors Authority, the Commonwealth Ports Authority, airlines, and hotels. Also, special appreciation is extended to Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang for their continued interest and support and tourism authorities," E-Land stated.

The company reaffirms its commitment to revitalizing the Northern Mariana Islands tourism industry.

"E-Land will continue to contribute to the development of the NMI's tourism sector. We also seek ongoing support from all stakeholders, including government agencies, MVA, CPA, airlines, and the hospitality industry," E-land added.

KILILI

From page 1

with employers, supporting his longstanding goal to put more CNMI workers in Marianas jobs.

Sablan's legislation, H.R. 3193, or the Employment Services Act and Jobs Parity Act, seeks to include the Marianas and American Samoa in the Federal Employment Service by amending the Wagner-Peyser Act.

The CNMI and American Samoa are the only two remaining U.S. jurisdictions ineligible to participate in the critical programs under Wagner-Peyser Act.

The Wager-Peyser Act establishes a nationwide system of public employment offices, known as the Employment Service.

The delegate said his language including the Marianas in the Wagner-Peyser Act, introduced earlier in the U.S. Congress as H.R. 3193, was piggybacked into the Further Continuing Appropriations and Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act 2025 that House Speaker Mike Johnson had agreed on Tuesday with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

Sablan said, however, Musk jumped in at the last minute opposing the appropriation legislation and then Trump followed Musk's lead.

He said Musk and Trump's opposition caused Johnson to renege on the deal he had negotiated. The delegate said that, last Friday, the House passed a stripped-down Continuing Resolution without the Wagner-Peyser language.

H.R. 3193 is included in H.R. 6655, which is also known as A Stronger Workforce For America Act. In December 2023, Sablan said they have a bipartisan agreement and that now is the time to upgrade America's economic competitiveness by making sure job seekers and employers in the Marianas or throughout the United States get the same high-quality services as other Americans everywhere in the United States does.

Sablan said it has been his longstanding priority, along with the "gentle lady from American Samoa" to include the NMI and the American Samoa under the Wagner-Peyser Act.

He said for the CNMI, his bill fills a critical gap in the workforce development services as it will able to provide employees by adding the NMI to the fundamental Federal Employment Service, the Work Opportunity Tax Credit under Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program, "strengthening available services for workers and businesses needed now more than ever before."

He said the Marianas and American Samoa have a reliance on non-U.S. workers that has contributed to ongoing disruptions for workforce.

SABLAN

From page 1

"My last day in the governor's office is Friday, Dec. 27. I gave the governor formal notice about a month ago and we met to discuss the transition and pending items that I was wrapping up," she said.

Although bittersweet, Sablan said she is deeply grateful to Palacios for the opportunity to have served in his administration alongside excellent public servants in the government.

"I am proud to have been part of an administration that has worked so hard to stop the bleeding of our government, stabilize our fiscal house, and make long-term, sustainable investments in our future—in our critical infrastructure, our economy, and our people. I am leaving solely for personal reasons, beginning a new life chapter and transitioning soon to split my time between here and Hawaii. So, I will still be around. My heart will always be here," she said.

In a brief interview with Palacios, he said he is saddened to see a friend and invaluable asset to the administration leave, but he wishes her the best of luck in her future endeavors.

"Tina has been a long-time friend, since she was in the Legislature. She's invaluable, she's intelligent, she's respectful, and she's an integral part of this administration. We'll be losing a valuable cabinet member. But things happen, she's starting a new chapter. I'm sad to see her leave but I wish her the best of luck," he said.

Fortunately, Palacios said, Sablan has agreed to stay in touch and will be available should issues arise where her invaluable advice and consultation is needed.

When asked whether he will be looking for a replacement, Palacios said most likely in the near future, but there are no prospects yet as of press time.

In a statement sent to *Saipan Tribune*, Palacios confirmed that Sablan informed him of her decision to resign strictly due to personal reasons.

"While we are sad to see her leave, I know that her important and long-lasting contributions to this administration, and more importantly, to the Commonwealth, will continue. It's clear that her impact on environmental stewardship, sustainable practices, reducing government waste, infrastructure modernization, and other initiatives will endure throughout the Commonwealth for many years."

Palacios said his administration will be forever grateful for the contributions of Sablan.

"Our team has been privileged to have worked with her these past two years as she has been an exceptional leader, bringing vision, integrity, and a firm commitment to the growth and development of our islands."

He then dispelled rumors that Sablan is leaving his administration due to some misunderstanding.

"I want to emphasize that she leaves her position in our administration on amicable terms, with my full support and gratitude. Her decision reflects her desire to pursue new opportunities on- and off-island, and we look forward to seeing what she accomplishes in this next chapter. On behalf of my administration, we thank her for her service and wish her every success in the future. Our paths may diverge for now, but our mission and our goals for the CNMI continue to be aligned."

SIS' Kim named National STEM champion

NEW YORK, NY—EXPLR announces the 106 student students whose outstanding performance in the National STEM Challenge has earned them the title of National STEM Champions. Local student, Misha Ja Young Kim from Saipan International School will be recognized at the National STEM Festival in Washington, D.C., on March 19-22, 2025.

» Kim one of 106 students who will receive all-expense paid trip to National STEM Festival in DC

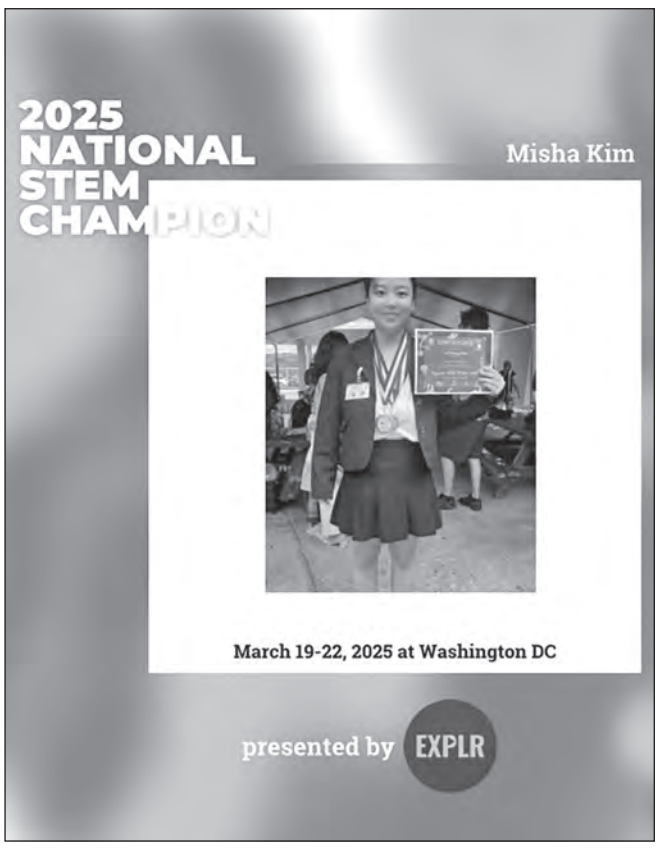
Each National STEM champion and a guardian will receive an all-expense paid trip, including lodging and travel, to attend the Festival and showcase their projects to the public and top business and government leaders. In addition, each National STEM Champion will receive free access to EXPLR's educational streaming video and curriculum platform for the teacher of their choice.

The National STEM Festival invited students in grades 7-12 from across the U.S. and its territories to conceive and submit STEM innovations, inventions, and research across six categories: Aerospace Innovation, Environmental Stewardship, Future Food, Health and Medicine, Powering the Planet, and Tech for Good.

During the National STEM Festival, students will showcase their projects to top government and corporate leaders, as well as network with other exceptional students from around the country.

"Congratulations to all the students selected as National STEM Champions! EXPLR created the National STEM Festival to spotlight the next generation of innovators-students who are bold thinkers, dynamic leaders, and creators with the power to make a real impact. I'm incredibly excited to welcome our STEM Champions to the Festival this spring, where their ideas will inspire us all," said Jenny Buccos, founder and CEO of EXPLR and co-director of the National STEM Festival.

EXPLR's mission is to help kids thrive in school and life by providing real-world, rigorous, and relevant educational resources. EXPLR is a streaming video and curriculum service for grade 5-12 students, teachers, and families that helps bridge critical gaps in K-12 education. It was co-founded by leading education and entertainment figures Jenny Buccos (founder of ProjectExplorer), Kari Byron (former Discovery Channel MythBuster), and Andrew Zimmern (TV personality, producer, and U.N. World Food Programme Goodwill Ambassador). Since launching in 2021, EXPLR is used in over 500 schools across 23 U.S. states. For more information, visit EXPLR.com. ***(PR)***



COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Director

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-25-010
FINANCIAL AND COMPLIANCE AUDIT FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025, 2026 & 2027

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) requires the services of a U.S. Certified Public Accounting Firm/Individual with knowledge, skill, and experience in auditing (1) financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and auditing standards of the U.S. and; (2) federal awards programs in accordance with the Single Audit Act and U.S. Office of Management and Budget requisites

- Provide assistance to the CUC management with the preparation of the annual financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America
- Ensure that the financial statements and auditor's reports also meet any specific requirements contained in agreements or other contractual requirements relative to financial statement presentation and the audits.
- Submit the draft financial statements and accompanying auditor's reports to CUC management no later than January 31st of each year, and issue the final reports no later than February 28th of each year.
- Provide 15 bound copies of the final financial statements and accompanying auditor's report
- Provide an electronic copy (e.g., .pdf format) of the final report to the CUC.

Auditors are responsible to review the 2025, 2026 & 2027 financial statements to include the physical CUC assets for each fiscal year.

The RFP package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one RFP package set.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies, along with an electronic copy of the proposal on a compact disk in PDF format must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked ***"CUC-RFP-25-010, Financial and Compliance Audit for Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2025, 2026 & 2027"*** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **January 10, 2025 at 10:00 AM** (ChST). Submissions, in PDF, must also be emailed to the addresses as noted in the RFP. Late submissions and conditional proposals will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. Offerors shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity to discussion and revision of proposals, and such revision may be permitted after submission and prior to award for the purpose of obtaining the best and final offers. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing offerors.

All Offeror are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Offeror due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. Offeror are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 20, 2024** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Betty G. Terlaje, CUC Chief Financial Officer, via email address betty.terlaje@cucgov.org,, Rodolfo Urbano, CUC Chief Accountant via email, rodolfo.urbano@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, via email address, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

KEVIN O. WATSON
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-25-009
SEWER MAIN AND MANHOLE REPLACEMENT/REHAB/UPGRADE PHASE II

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the construction of the Sewer Main and Manhole Replacement/Rehab/Upgrade Phase II in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of realignment and replacement of the existing 4-inch bypass sewer line in **Capitol Hill Village** along **Capitol Hill Road** with a new 8-inch PVC distribution main. The scope includes the installation of appurtenances, fittings, new manholes with accessories, and the rehabilitation and reconnection of existing manholes, including the replacement of their accessories. All work must be performed in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications, ensuring no disruption to the daily operation of the sewer system. The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) requires the project to be completed within three hundred sixty-five (365) calendar days from the date of contract award.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **December 23, 2024, at 10:00 AM(CHST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies of the bid MUST be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "**CUC-IFB-25-009, SEWER MAIN AND MANHOLE REPLACEMENT/REHAB/UPGRADE PHASE II**" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) January 16, 2025**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time.

Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A *Bid Guarantee* of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidder. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands or otherwise secured in a manner satisfactory to CUC, for the protection of all persons supplying labor and material to the contractor or its subcontractors for the performance of the work provided for in the contract.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 a.m. (CHST) on December 30, 2024** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Officer via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Joel Puyat, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer at email joel.puyat@cucgov.org, and to Marcela Tenorio, P&S, Senior Administrative Technician at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

KEVIN O. WATSON
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 255

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

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EDITORIAL

Putin's weaker than he looks. Seize the opportunity

Russian President Vladimir Putin has sought to project an image of economic strength while prosecuting the war in Ukraine, as if he could easily outlast the West's efforts to counter his aggression. If President-elect Donald Trump and other Western leaders want to negotiate a prudent peace deal, they shouldn't buy it.

More than most autocrats, Putin understands the importance of economic resilience. Before invading, he built a fiscal fortress to protect his regime. It included a balanced federal budget; minimal foreign borrowing; hundreds of billions of dollars in central bank reserves; and a $175 billion national wealth fund, designed to smooth the effect of volatile energy prices on the country's fossil-fuel-dependent revenue.

This preparation (alongside continued oil and gas exports) has helped Putin survive Western sanctions and defy predictions of economic collapse. He delivered a vast stimulus by ramping up military spending from less than 4% to (by some estimates) 10% of gross domestic product—providing high-paying jobs in defense production and life-changing payments to the often-destitute families of soldiers. Together with government-subsidized mortgage loans (now discontinued), the largesse fueled a consumer spending and construction boom.

Now the costs are mounting. Everything is more expensive: By one estimate, a representative basket of consumer goods in Russia costs about 80% more than before the war. Wages have shot up, with much of the labor force killed, wounded or otherwise unavailable. Surging inflation has forced the central bank to raise its key interest rate to an extreme 21%, crushing investment in civilian businesses. The stimulus is petering out: By official measures, growth is expected to slow to 1% next year, from 3.9% this year. Adjusted for independent measures of inflation, Russia's real output has contracted sharply.

Worse for Putin, his fortress is much diminished. Some $300 billion in central bank reserves are stuck in the West, perhaps never to return. The wealth fund's liquid cash, denominated in Chinese yuan, has dwindled to the equivalent of about $31 billion. Profligate lending has weakened banks. This renders Russia much more vulnerable to economic shocks, such as a drop in global oil prices. The longer the war goes on, the greater the damage — and the greater the need to resort to unpopular measures, such as raising taxes or cutting social spending.

Granted, economic constraints alone won't force Putin to end the war anytime soon. They do, however, reflect an advantage that Western nations should press. The combined economies of the U.S. and Europe are more than 20 times larger than Russia's. Showing continued resolve to outspend Putin would help bring him to the negotiating table and offer crucial leverage. Such a commitment—combined with continued supplies of sophisticated weaponry and toughened sanctions—would maximize the chances of a reasonable deal.

Public patience with extending aid to Ukraine is clearly ebbing, in the U.S. and elsewhere. But slashing support now would not end the war on desirable terms. On the contrary, it would embolden Putin and—in all likelihood—prove far more costly in the long run. Russia's economy is weaker than it looks. The West should seize this opportunity while it can.

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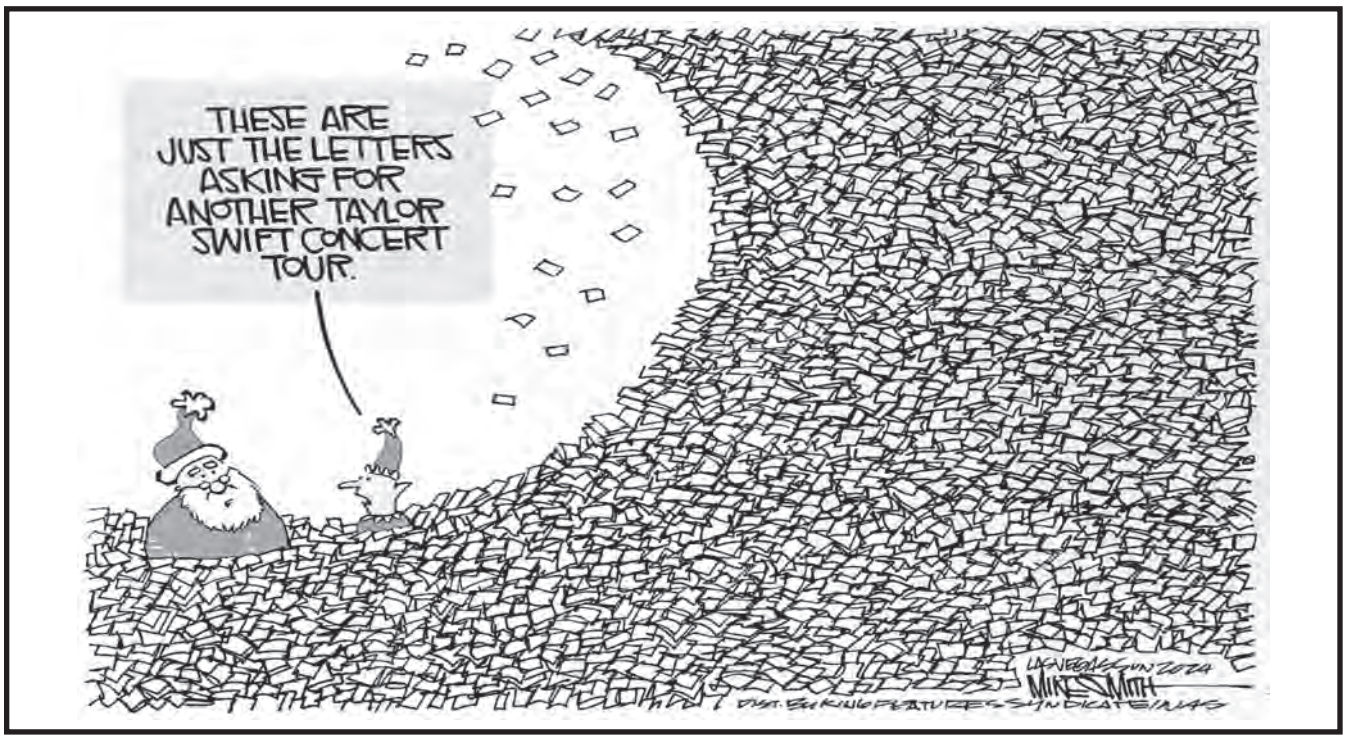
THESE ARE JUST THE LETTERS ASKING FOR ANOTHER TAYLOR SWIFT CONCERT TOUR.
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL 2024
MIKE SMITH
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Another pandemic is inevitable, and we're not ready

By F.D. FLAM
Bloomberg Opinion

F.D. Flam is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering science. She is host of the "Follow the Science" podcast.

Every week or so, scientists issue another warning that the H5N1 bird flu is inching closer to exploding into a pandemic. Despite having contended with a pandemic that broke out less than five years ago, the U.S. has no solid plan to handle a new one—nor have our leaders done anything to incorporate the lessons learned from the government's less-than-ideal handling of COVID-19.

Too many Americans died from COVID because the public health community took too long to issue warnings, was slow to create tests to assess the situation, and was sluggish in shifting its response to fit the data on airborne transmission. The much-criticized lockdowns could have been less disruptive and saved more lives had they been periodically adjusted as data changed on who was most at risk and which activities were riskiest.

Already, some of the same mistakes can be seen in the response to H5N1, which started in poultry before a new variant began infecting the nation's dairy cows. The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced this month that it would start sampling the nation's milk supply to test for the virus. California instituted a recall of some raw milk and raw milk products after samples tested positive. But there's a lot more that could be done to reduce the odds of this situation leading to a pandemic.

Moreover, President-elect Donald Trump's picks to lead the nation's top public health agencies—the officials who would be in charge of any pandemic response—have prompted concerns among scientists and health experts. They include Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a vaccine skeptic and raw milk enthusiast, for the top job of secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. He also has ties to the California producer whose farm was the subject of the state's recall after several batches of raw milk products tested positive for the virus. The farmer told Politico he's been asked to apply for the position of "raw milk adviser" at the Food and Drug Administration.

Trump's pick to run the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, former Representative Dave Weldon, pushed false theories about childhood vaccines as a member of Congress and was a critic of the CDC and its vaccine program. And to lead the National Institutes of Health, Trump has named Jay Bhattacharya, author of the Great Barrington Declaration, which criticized the government's COVID response and promoted the theory—based on bad science—that the pandemic would end quickly through herd immunity. Marty Makary, who Trump picked to head the FDA, promoted the same notion of herd immunity as he promised that even without vaccination, COVID would disappear in several months.

We likely won't know how these officials might handle the next crisis until their Senate confirmation hearings early next year.

There have been periodic outbreaks of H5N1, commonly called the bird flu, in the domestic bird population since the mid-1990s. But while fewer than 1,000 people worldwide have tested positive for the virus since then, scientists are alarmed because it killed half of those known to be infected. In 2022, the virus started showing up in mammals—foxes, bears, raccoons, sea lions, porpoises and minks—and then, in March of this year, in U.S. dairy cows. Millions of U.S. chickens have been euthanized to control outbreaks in flocks of poultry, and in October, officials confirmed that the virus had been found in a pig here for the first time.

In a study of supermarket milk last April, virus fragments appeared in 58 out of 150 samples. Scientists who conducted the study said heat from pasteurization would kill the virus. But raw milk from infected cows is swarming with live virus—enough to kill barn cats that have lapped up splatters.

At least 60 confirmed human cases of bird flu have been reported in the U.S. this year, including two in Arizona. Most have been farm workers who had contact with livestock or poultry, and their symptoms were mild. More worrisome are the few cases whose origin remains a mystery, including a teen in British Columbia who was hospitalized with a mutated version of the virus and a California child who was diagnosed with moderate symptoms in November. There have been no confirmed cases of person-to-person transmission.

"In my opinion, it is a matter of time before we start to see documented human-to-human transmission of this virus … because we're continuing to let this virus infect humans and adapt to people," said Seema Lakdawala, an immunologist at Emory University School of Medicine.

To decrease that likelihood, she says efforts should focus on minimizing outbreaks among cattle. That means not just monitoring some milk samples but identifying individual infected cows and ensuring they are isolated and their milk disposed of safely so that it doesn't make its way into irrigation water where it could infect other animals. She said that even if those cows aren't killed, just isolating them could prevent further spread.

Each new infection allows the virus to make millions of slightly mutated copies, increasing the odds that one will acquire the ability to easily jump from person to person. A study published recently in Science showed that the variant currently spreading through hundreds of herds needs only a single mutation to gain the ability to attach to receptors on human cells.

Much remains unknown, including why bird flu hasn't started a pandemic. But there will be another pandemic at some point, said Michael Osterholm, an epidemiologist who has advised ev-

See PANDEMIC on Page 7

Truth 78: Warning it's not economic development, it's monopoly-subterfuge!

By AMBROSE M. BENNETT
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Ambrose M. Bennett is an economist who minored in sociology, political scientist, a retired teacher, and former CNMI Board of Education member, a James Madison Fellow (U.S. constitutional scholar), a Fulbright-Hays and lifetime humanities scholar who resides in Kagman III in the CNMI.

The truth of the matter is CEDA did not generate any new competitive economic development but indeed set the conditions for MACS to have a monopoly over our interisland air travel and cargo. I'm not against MACS and I thank them for their cargo services but for CPA to trump-up a case to get rid of Star Marianas while the government literally goes into a partnership with MACS using our money and we didn't have any say—total disrespect but we were promised trust—can't wait to see what that means to the governor. Furthermore, CEDA already had procession of Star Marianas' complaint that they put on the backburner on purpose to allow MACS to have an unfair competitive advantage. Star Marianas' complaint should have been resolved before CPA decided to throw them out and before CEDA decided on MACS, as the fees where in the process for a resolution but fair wasn't on the agenda. The real question for the people is will our leaders in the Legislature, especially Democrats, call for a public hearing and oversight hearing to make sure the people want and are getting the best deal! I'm sure any economist will tell the people of the CNMI, the people will lose money on 22 years of no taxes, as we are talking about tens of millions and surely over $100 million in the 22 years period, do the math! There is also a reasonable expectation our economy will not always be this way given it is at the lowest level possible, as the only way is up! The only thing we the people are being guaranteed in this deal is medical referral travel and lower fares which are not guaranteed. We need to learn to "help ourselves before giving our future away for a hand out today, as medical air travel may be less than 10% of air travel, so do the math leaders and look before you leap.

The government should never go in business with the private sector unless it is forced to, like we should have done with the casino before it was too late, but that's another story. The truth is, our government is poised to go in business with MACS and even making them a monopoly by running the competition away, which is the horror story part of this deal. If the governor wanted cheaper fares and medical referral exemptions, he should reform our laws and policies to start a medical and social (low income) air travel subsidy program using airline tax credit for each ticket paying as we go or the MPLT's unused $100 million of locals' $$$ to finally help locals after 42 years! Give subsidies to Star Marianas and MACS creating a healthy and competitive air travel. But don't use subterfuge to run Star Marianas away—a hostile takeover creating a monopoly with our money—here we go again! We need competition for lower airfares, not a monopoly!

The people and our leaders need to be reminded of business people's modus operandi which is to catch them when they are down and buy or takeover which is what is happening with CPA's push to get rid of Star Marianas. They were trying to make the Star Marianas' issue a separate issue but I'm sure those with common sense can see CPA's subterfuge was done in concert with CEDA, which stinks! There is also the fact in business to use other people's money to get rich, as MACS is not capable of handling our passenger interisland travel, yet we are going to help them buy aircraft and pay pilots with our taxes. It's ridiculous, we have an airline, as this is like the Cannabis Commission we don't need—ka du ku!

Learn to help ourselves with reforms before giving 22 years of oir future away for a small hand out today. Everyone in the CNMI is going to be affected by the stench unless a deodorizing agent (check) for a clean and fair airline's decision with a program for both airlines to be washed publicly in a public hearing. where are my Democrats, the people's party, who need to make a name crunching the numbers and demanding for a public hearing, as we know Republicans are going to rubberstamp the governor. Our taxes are our business and the House, not CEDA's nor Arnold's, especially with favoritism giving away our future without consent. I'm sure the people are surely sick and tired of GOP stuffing subterfuge down our throats—no trust and maybe no second term for Arnold if he signs this without his community's approval!

We don't need to take the big risk of giving our taxes away for 22 years when we are already collecting these same taxes and will continue to collect these taxes if Star Marianas isn't run away. We need to be trying to keep both airlines and our future, not give in to political duress favoritism deals. Once our economy turns around, as it will get better, we are going to be very disappointed over this deal under Republican political duress just like we were forced with the exclusive casino deal that we now hate! Please prove we have learned Democrats and don't let this be another "I told you so."

I truly miss my late friends Bishop Camacho, former governor Froilan Tenorio, and senator Crisostomo who I believe would all be trying to say or do something for the people to stop this subterfuge. I think the bishop might even agree we have some Pharisees who need to be stopped, as it was the Jewish Pharisees within society wanting Jesus crucified, like our rights to be heard, protected, and served are being crucified by those who serve God on Sunday and do the devil's work on Monday! This deal is about pure subterfuge just like the casino and it will not have a happy ending just like the casino. When will we learn to control our fate and stop putting it in China and now CEDA.

Between the immensities: 'Jilgohon Christmas Boneseyu' (In Korean, have a good Christmas)

Nostalgic news, Korean food menu reviews

This was part of my Scrumptious Sonnets series on food: meat, dairy, fruit and vegetables from several years ago; first published in the *Saipan Tribune* on June 27, 2019.

Food for thought: Korean food

Acrostic sonnets, appetizing poems and proverbs
"Nam-ui deok-ee keo-bo-een-da" or " Your rice cake looks bigger than mine" It means the grass is always greener on the other side.

BIBIMBAP RAP and GIMCHI GAZETEER

B – Bibimbap is rice, egg, meat, vegetables in hot sauce
I – Incheon means 'kind river' a large port city, pop. 2.5 million
B – Busan means 'kettle mountain' the shape of a mountain nearby
I – Incheon has had a Hyanggo, Confucian School, since 1392
M – Making kimchi is an essential skill for men and women
B – Bring on the 'bugeo guk' (seafood soup) and bulgogi
A – A name for the Korean peninsula is Hanbando
P – Pyongyang North Korea is only 121 miles from Seoul

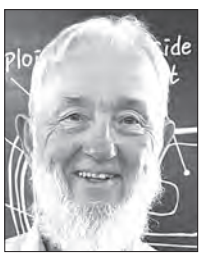
G - Gimchi, fermented vegetables, is spelled kimchi on Western menus
I – Interest in Buddhist temples remains strong with Koreans
M – Military protection lies along the northern border
C – Chili pepper and chili powder predominate in kimchi
H – Hot peppers are good for heart problems and spice up your life
I – Investigate many different forms of gimchi/kimchee immediately

"Geu-reem-ui deok" or "A picture of a rice cake' You see the picture and it makes you hungry. You're close to something but still not able to reach it."
"Soo-bak geo halt-gi" or 'Licking the outside of a watermelon" Like just scratching the surface. This Korean proverb implies someone has made a decision or comment without knowing all the facts.

BULGOGI BALLAD and JAPCHAE JOURNAL

B – Bulgogi which means "fire meat" is Korean BBQ beef
U – Usually it is made with beef but can be pork or chicken
L – Lots of Koreans drink a 22-percent rice wine called soju
G – Galbi or kalbi is the Korean word for 'rib' usually beef
O – On most Korean tables are different kinds of kimchi
G – Guksu is the Korean word for noodles
I – In bulgogi you find pears often used as a sweet marinade

LITERARY NOOK
By JOEY CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune



Joey Connolly aka "Pepe Batbon" is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is the Poet Laureate of Tinian and enjoys stargazing.

J – Japchae is a noodle dish with marinated beef and veggies
A – Apples tenderize bulgogi, spiced up with ginger and garlic
P – Pears from Korea are preferred for use in bulgogi and kalbi
C – Cakes of glutinous rice, tteok, are desserts with Korean meals
H – Have some Korean fruit desserts after your meal
A – Americans don't like seeing dog meat served on the menu
E – Eat the watermelon, don't lick the outside, facts are inside

"Mee-oon nam deok ha-na deo joon da" or 'Give one more rice cake to a person you hate'. In other words, keep your friends close and your enemies closer.

PANDEMIC

From page 6

ery president since Ronald Reagan and is now director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy. "The pandemic clock is ticking. We just don't know what time it is," he said.

Osterholm has investigated Ebola, Zika and other deadly viruses. Still, coronaviruses and influenza are by far the most likely to blow up into global pandemics because they are easily transmitted through the air.

That means we should plan for the possibility—before it happens. And we need something more detailed than the National Security Council playbook drawn up during the Obama administration and famously ignored by Trump. It outlined organizing an initial pandemic response, such as connecting political leaders with scientific experts. But it didn't include details for things like shutdowns, mask mandates or other measures taken during COVID. Osterholm said drafting a new plan should begin with a bipartisan investigation into how COVID-19 was handled—like the 9/11 commission. "Not to point fingers," he told me, but to prepare for next time.

A new playbook should also consider long-term sustainability. Osterholm said data available in spring 2020 showed COVID was so easily transmissible that the pandemic could drag on for years. And yet, nobody wanted to hear it.

He argues that the U.S. and China could have saved many more lives with short-term, data-driven closures of restaurants and other high-risk settings when cases were rising. That strategy could have been sustained as long as the threat persisted. In China, which lifted its strict three-year-long zero-COVID lockdown before the threat had ebbed, the CDC estimates 1.4 million people died in the first three months the restrictions were eased.

A new preparedness plan should also include more protection for essential workers and their families. During 2020, many people with known risk factors or elderly relatives at home were thrown into dangerous work situations.

The U.S. endured waves of deaths in the winter of 2020-2021 when many Americans could no longer tolerate staying in their homes. Sustainability would matter even more if the next pandemic had a higher fatality rate.

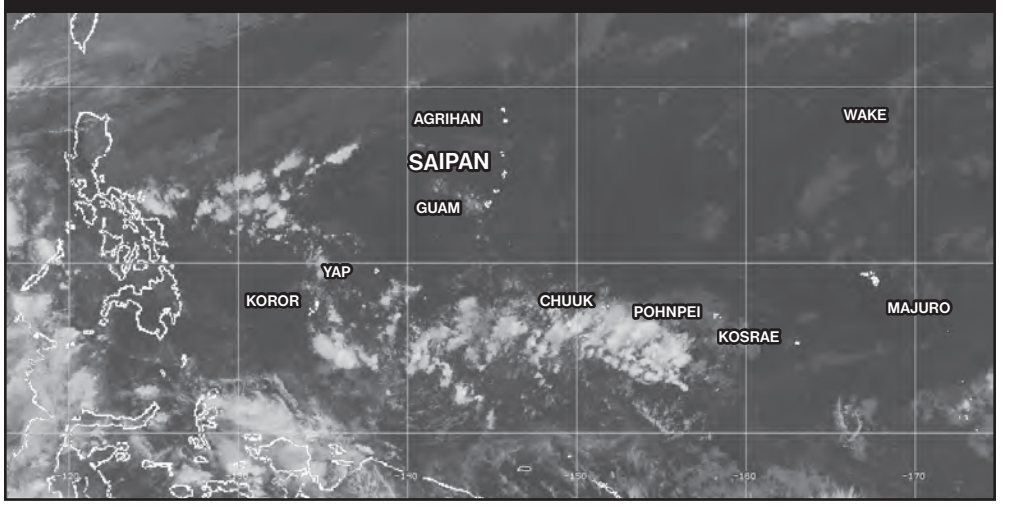
While it's often repeated that more than a million Americans died, we lack an analysis of how they got infected and how they were in harm's way. It wasn't about bad behavior but inadequate policy. Good policy is designed to work for human beings the way we are. With COVID, it was all created on the fly. It doesn't have to be that way next time.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy. Isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
86° 78°	86° 78°	86° 77°	87° 78°	87° 78°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:26 AM SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A High Surf Advisory and a high risk of rip currents has been issued for north facing reefs, and a Small Craft Advisory has been issued for Tinian and Saipan. Only minor edits were needed for the forecast this morning. The main concern tonight was the incoming north swell. Altimetry pass was to the west of the Marianas about 300 nautical miles shows 8 to 10 feet. Tanapag buoy shows 8 to 9 feet and climbing. Models, however, are a suggesting a foot or two lower than observations. For these reason, a Small Craft Advisory for Tinian and Saipan. Guam and Rota`s seas will also rise, however at this time not expected to meet the 10 foot level to warrant an advisory. All boaters in the Marianas should exercise caution when dealing with the seas.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Mostly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Palau	Mostly Cloudy	84° / 77°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Mostly Cloudy	87° / 81°
Pohnpei	Cloudy	86° / 79°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	87° / 80°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	86° / 81°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:39 AM	5:52 PM
Tuesday	6:39 AM	5:53 PM
Wednesday	6:40 AM	5:54 PM
Thursday	6:40 AM	5:54 PM
Friday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	12:00 AM	12:19 PM	-
Tuesday	12:46 AM	12:51 PM	-
Wednesday	1:32 AM	1:25 PM	-
Thursday	2:19 AM	2:01 PM	-
Friday	3:09 AM	2:41 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	79° / 66°
Beijing	Sunny	46° / 21°
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	64° / 61°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	78° / 65°
London	Showers	54° / 45°
Los Angeles	Sunny	65° / 42°
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	84° / 77°
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	82° / 55°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	79° / 68°
New York	Partly Cloudy	45° / 30°
Osaka	Sunny	52° / 37°
Paris	Cloudy	50° / 45°
Busan	Sunny	48° / 32°
Rome	Sunny	50° / 34°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	62° / 51°
San Francisco	Sunny	57° / 42°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	43° / 30°
Tokyo	Sunny	52° / 34°
Washington, DC	Sunny	45° / 33°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
12:26 AM	High Tide	1.09
7:04 AM	Low Tide	0.34
2:13 PM	High Tide	1.57
9:10 PM	Low Tide	0.61

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SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	1:20PM	4:00PM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

7C3218/2305	2:45AM	10:20PM	Daily via Incheon
UA076/183 Guam	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:30AM	6:25AM	Daily
7C3218	2:45AM	6:45AM	Daily from Dec 8
7C3212	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

7C3552	3:55AM	7:20AM	3, 6 from Dec 25

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX77	3:05AM	5:55AM	1, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	5:30PM	10:05PM	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA156	00:40AM	6:25AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:40AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA156	00:40AM	8:45AM	3, 6 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM +1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3407	11:20PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3211	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:00PM	1:30AM+1	Daily
7C3217	8:10PM	1:40AM+1	Daily from Dec 8

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

7C3551	9:25PM	2:50AM+1	2, 5 from Dec 25

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

HX76	6:25PM	1:35AM+1	4, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

What changes should small businesses be aware of for 2025?

By MAE ANDERSON
AP Business Writer

AP

Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during a news conference at the Federal Reserve, Dec. 18, 2024, in Washington.

For small businesses, the biggest change in the new year will be the arrival of a presumably more business-friendly administration in Washington. But there are other shifts owners should keep on their radar.

Among them: changes to state-level overtime and minimum wage rules, the delayed federal FinCEN registration, taxes on payments from third-party providers like Venmo and PayPal, and anything that might affect inflation, including tariffs.

The Small Business Administration is also ushering in a new leader, Trump loyalist Kelly Loeffler, assuming she's confirmed by the Senate.

"I think there a general sense that there is going to be obviously a pro-business administration on the regulatory side," said Karen Kerrigan, President and CEO of the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council, an advocacy group. "But there could be some nuances specifically on, say, workplace or labor rules. But that's still to be determined."

Here's what small business owners should keep in mind in 2025.

INFLATION

Inflation remains a wild card for 2025. Inflation has retreated from its peak of 7.2% in June 2022, according to the Fed's preferred gauge, standing at 2.3% in October. Moves by the Federal Reserve and the incoming Trump administration are likely to swing inflation one way or another.

On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve raised its projection for the inflation rate for 2025 to 2.5% from a prior estimate of 2.1% issued in September. The Fed also forecast just two rate cuts for the year, down from four. Sticky inflation and high rates could mean higher costs for both consumers and businesses.

Meanwhile, Trump has proposed a range of tax cuts—on Social Security benefits, tipped income and overtime income—as well as a scaling-back of regulations. Collectively, these moves could stimulate growth. At the same time, Trump has threatened to impose a variety of tariffs on imports and to seek mass deportations of migrants, which could accelerate inflation.

Either way, inflation is certain to remain top of mind for small business owners.

"What we've seen for the past two-and-a-half years is that inflation is the top concern for small business," said Tom Sullivan, vice president of small business policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "When you're thinking about 2025, there is a significant question on whether or not the incoming president's policies are going to bring inflation down."

SBA CHANGES

Established in 1953, the SBA has been through many different administrations. The agency offers resources to small businesses and helps administer small business and disaster recovery loans. It played a crucial role during the pandemic, helping distribute small business aid.

Trump said he would nominate Kelly Loeffler, a former U.S. Senator from Georgia, as the head of the SBA, pending confirmation. She replaces Isabella Casillas Guzman, who has served as the administrator since 2021. A staunch Trump loyalist, Loeffler is also co-chair of his inaugural committee.

Loeffler hasn't made any statement about plans for the SBA.

"I wouldn't expect any sort of dramatic change or shifts in terms lending and some of those programs, I think that will happen over time," said SBE Council's Kerrigan.

STATE OVERTIME RULES AND MINIMUM WAGE CHANGES

While a national federal rule expanding overtime coverage to millions of Americans was blocked by a federal judge in November, several states still have an overtime threshold increase going into effect, and those aren't affected by the block.

Six states are raising their threshold for overtime pay: Alaska, California, Colorado, Maine, New York and Washington. For example, in Alaska, the state threshold to be exempt from overtime pay will rise from $48,796.80 in 2024 to $54,080 on July 1.

"Employers will need to be aware of those thresholds and make sure that they're complying with state law if they have employees in any of those states," said Tyler Yamnik, an employment attorney and human resources consultant for HR firm Engage PEO.

Meanwhile, 23 states and 65 cities and counties have minimum wage increases set to go into effect in 2025, either Jan. 1 or later in the year.

Rich Kingly, CEO of Driveway King in Garwood, N.J., which renovates pathways and driveways, said he's watching the state-specific minimum wage changes.

"As we operate in multiple states, staying compliant with each state's rules and regulations is an ongoing challenge," he said. "As minimum wage rates rise, it adds to the financial pressures of running a business, especially in the face of fluctuating material costs and competitive pricing."

FINCEN REGISTRATION

A rule that would require millions of small businesses to register with an agency called the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, or FinCEN, by Jan. 1 is currently temporarily blocked in court.

The registration is part of the Corporate Transparency Act, an anti-money laundering statue passed in 2021. Registering isn't difficult. The owners and part-owners of those businesses must register personal information with FinCEN, such as a photo ID and home address.

But small business groups say the regulation is too onerous. If it goes into effect, small businesses that don't comply could be fined up to $10,000. Businesses with more than 20 employees and more than $5 million in sales can qualify for exemptions.

Steve DiMatteo, CEO of e-commerce site Cleveland Vintage Shirts, said he had trouble tracking down information about the registration because government communication was lacking. He sought guidance from an X account that helps small businesses.

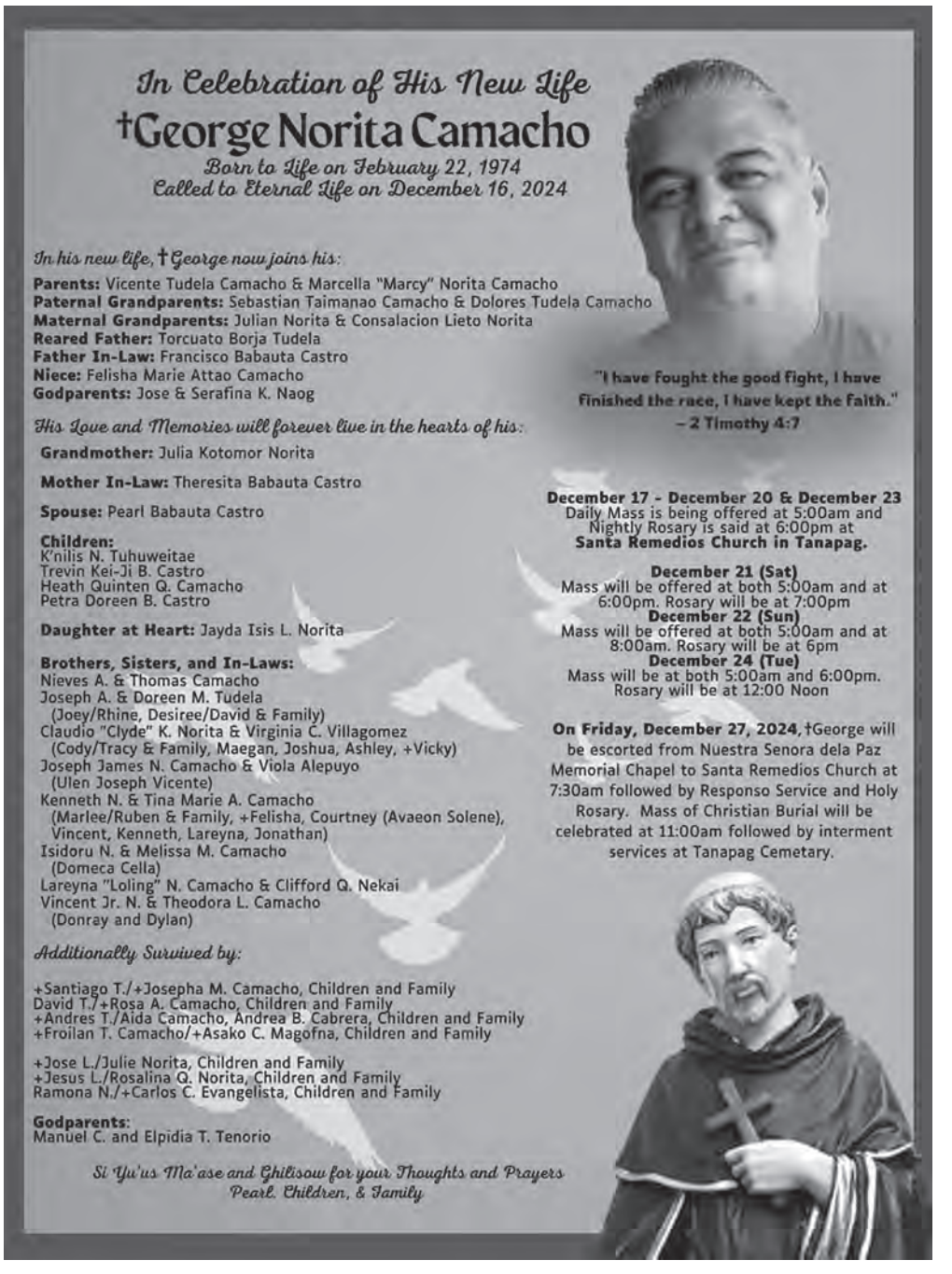
"My biggest concern stems from this experience—what other rules and regulations am I going to miss because of a lack of clear communication from the government, either at the state or federal level?," he said.

PAYMENT APP TAXES

Another regulation that has been on small businesses' radar for several years is taxes on payments via third-party apps like PayPal, Cash App, Venmo and similar platforms.

Traditionally, the threshold to report earnings from payments from third-party apps was $20,000 and 200 transactions. But the American Rescue Act drastically lowered that to $600 and over with no transaction minimum.

The regulation was delayed for the past two years, but small businesses paying taxes for 2024 will now be required to pay taxes on anything over $5,000 as part of a phase-in to eventually implement the $600 reporting threshold.


In Celebration of His New Life
†George Norita Camacho
Born to Life on February 22, 1974
Called to Eternal Life on December 16, 2024
In his new life, †George now joins his:
Parents: Vicente Tudela Camacho & Marcella "Marcy" Norita Camacho
Paternal Grandparents: Sebastian Taimanao Camacho & Dolores Tudela Camacho
Maternal Grandparents: Julian Norita & Consalacion Lieto Norita
Reared Father: Torcuato Borja Tudela
Father In-Law: Francisco Babauta Castro
Niece: Felisha Marie Attao Camacho
Godparents: Jose & Serafina K. Naog
His Love and Memories will forever live in the hearts of his:
Grandmother: Julia Kotomor Norita
Mother In-Law: Theresita Babauta Castro
Spouse: Pearl Babauta Castro
Children:
K'nilis N. Tuhuweitae
Trevin Kei-Ji B. Castro
Heath Quinten Q. Camacho
Petra Doreen B. Castro
Daughter at Heart: Jayda Isis L. Norita
Brothers, Sisters, and In-Laws:
Nieves A. & Thomas Camacho
Joseph A. & Doreen M. Tudela
(Joey/Rhine, Desiree/David & Family)
Claudio "Clyde" K. Norita & Virginia C. Villagomez
(Cody/Tracy & Family, Maegan, Joshua, Ashley, +Vicky)
Joseph James N. Camacho & Viola Alepuyo
(Ulen Joseph Vicente)
Kenneth N. & Tina Marie A. Camacho
(Marlee/Ruben & Family, +Felisha, Courtney (Avaeon Solene), Vincent, Kenneth, Lareyna, Jonathan)
Isidoru N. & Melissa M. Camacho
(Domeca Cella)
Lareyna "Loling" N. Camacho & Clifford Q. Nekai
Vincent Jr. N. & Theodora L. Camacho
(Donray and Dylan)
Additionally Survived by:
+Santiago T./+Josepha M. Camacho, Children and Family
David T./+Rosa A. Camacho, Children and Family
+Andres T./Aida Camacho, Andrea B. Cabrera, Children and Family
+Froilan T. Camacho/+Asako C. Magofna, Children and Family
+Jose L./Julie Norita, Children and Family
+Jesus L./Rosalina Q. Norita, Children and Family
Ramona N./+Carlos C. Evangelista, Children and Family
Godparents:
Manuel C. and Elpidia T. Tenorio
Si Yu'us Ma'ase and Ghilisow for your Thoughts and Prayers
Pearl, Children, & Family
"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."
– 2 Timothy 4:7
December 17 - December 20 & December 23
Daily Mass is being offered at 5:00am and Nightly Rosary is said at 6:00pm at
Santa Remedios Church in Tanapag.
December 21 (Sat)
Mass will be offered at both 5:00am and at 6:00pm. Rosary will be at 7:00pm
December 22 (Sun)
Mass will be offered at both 5:00am and at 8:00am. Rosary will be at 6pm
December 24 (Tue)
Mass will be at both 5:00am and 6:00pm. Rosary will be at 12:00 Noon
On Friday, December 27, 2024, †George will be escorted from Nuestra Senora dela Paz Memorial Chapel to Santa Remedios Church at 7:30am followed by Responso Service and Holy Rosary. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:00am followed by interment services at Tanapag Cemetary.

Nation

Biden signs bill averting a government shutdown

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden signed a bill into law Saturday that averts a government shutdown, bringing a final close to days of upheaval after Congress approved a temporary funding plan just past the deadline and refused President-elect Donald Trump's core debt demands in the package.

» Brings a close to days of Washington upheaval

The deal funds the government at current levels through March 14 and provides $100 billion in disaster aid and $10 billion in agricultural assistance to farmers.

"This agreement represents a compromise, which means neither side got everything it wanted," Biden said in a statement, adding that "it ensures the government can continue to operate at full capacity. That's good news for the American people."

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., had insisted lawmakers would "meet our obligations" and not allow federal operations to close. But the outcome at the end of a tumultuous week was uncertain after Trump had insisted the deal include an increase in the government's borrowing limit. If not, he had said, then let the closures "start now."

Johnson's revised plan was approved 366-34, and it was passed by the Senate by a 85-11 vote after midnight. By then, the White House said it had ceased shutdown preparations.

"There will be no government shutdown," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

Johnson, who had spoken to Trump after the House vote, said the compromise was "a good outcome for the country" and that the president-elect "was certainly happy about this outcome, as well."

The final product was the third attempt from Johnson, the beleaguered speaker, to achieve one of the basic requirements of the federal government—keeping it open. The difficulties raised questions about whether Johnson will be able to keep his job, in the face of angry Republican colleagues, and work alongside Trump and his billionaire ally Elon Musk, who was calling the legislative plays from afar.

The House is scheduled to elect the next speaker on Jan. 3, 2025, when the new Congress convenes. Republicans will have an exceedingly narrow majority, 220-215, leaving Johnson little margin for error as he tries to win the speaker's gavel.

One House Republican, Rep. Andy Harris of Maryland, criticized Republicans for the deficit spending in the bill and said he was now "undecided" about the GOP leadership. Others are signaling unhappiness with Johnson as well.

Yet Trump's last-minute debt limit demand was almost an impossible ask, and Johnson had almost no choice but to work around that pressure. The speaker knew there wouldn't be enough support within the slim Republican majority alone to pass any funding package because many Republican deficit hawks prefer to cut the federal government and would not allow more debt.

After shooting, Wisconsin school and church lean into Christmas message for comfort

For Christians around the world, Christmas is the joyful celebration of the birth of Jesus. To affirm their beliefs—that God is present and hasn't abandoned them—the faith community at Abundant Life Christian School in Madison, Wisconsin, is embracing its holiday traditions just days after a deadly shooting there.

"When people say, 'Where is your God?' He is more evident now than he's ever been to us," the Rev. Sarah Karlen told The Associated Press. "I'm sure the phrase 'Prince of Peace' and 'God with us' is going to be leaned into a little more this year."

Karlen is a pastor at City Church, which in the late 1970s founded the school where she's also the theater teacher. On Saturday, in the same space decorated with festive trees where students had performed their Christmas concert just the previous week, the church held the funeral of a 14-year-old student, Rubi Patricia Vergara. She was killed Monday when another student opened fire, also killing a teacher and wounding several others at the school on the same campus.

"When we say that God is with us, especially here at Christmas time—when we say, you know, Emmanuel 'God with us,' that he came to Earth to be with us—I know beyond a shadow of a doubt each and every one of us here at City Church would say that in a very new way," Karlen added.

Decked in holiday light displays and a Nativity scene, the evangelical, nondenominational church with over 1,200 members also hosted a vigil service Tuesday.

Then, drawing from Scripture and particularly the Book of Job, pastors addressed the challenge of reconciling faith in a loving God with his allowing great suffering to occur.

Karlen also challenged some of the taunts on the school's social media that questioned its religious beliefs. To the assembly's applause, she repeatedly affirmed God's presence in the midst of the grieving and the weariness.

"None of us on our staff are saying that we understand why or how something happened. But we do understand that God sees us, sees things very differently than we do," Karlen said later.

Police are continuing to investigate why Natalie "Samantha" Rupnow, 15, attacked the school before fatally shooting herself. While dozens of school shootings have happened across the U.S. in recent years, the vast majority are carried out by teenage boys and young men.

Barbara Wiers said faith is helping teachers, students and families make peace with the possibility they will never have complete answers.

"There may never be sense made out of this senseless tragedy. But. God, right? God understands, and God was there, and God is still here," said Wiers, the school's director for elementary education and communications. "Ultimately, it's not about man's judgment, although there's going to be all of that—because of the legal system and how that plays out. But God's just judgment will reign. And we trust him for that." ***(AP)***

World

A RUSSIAN OFFICIAL SAYS

Ukrainian strike with US-supplied missiles kills six

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Ukrainian attack Friday on a town in Russia's Kursk border region using U.S.-supplied missiles killed six people, including a child, a senior local official said. The attack came hours after Ukrainian authorities said a Russian ballistic missile strike on Kyiv killed at least one person and wounded 13.

Moscow claimed the Kyiv strike was in response to a Ukrainian strike on Russian soil using American-made weapons earlier this week.

Ten other people in the Kursk town of Rylsk, including a 13-year-old, were hospitalized after Friday's strike with HIMARS missiles, Kursk acting Gov. Alexander Khinshtein said. He provided no further details.

Russia is trying to push back a Ukrainian incursion into Kursk that was launched in early August, but Ukraine's troops are dug in.

The truck-mounted HIMARS launchers fire GPS-guided missiles capable of hitting targets up to 80 kilometers (50 miles) away. The mobile launchers are hard for the enemy to spot and can quickly change position after firing to escape airstrikes.

President Joe Biden last month authorized Ukraine to use U.S.-supplied missiles to strike deeper inside Russia, easing limitations on the longer range weapons. The move was a response to Russia deploying thousands of North Korean troops to reinforce its war effort, officials said.

AP

People take shelter in a metro station during an air raid alarm in Kyiv, Ukraine, Friday, Dec. 20, 2024.

Shortly before sunrise Friday, at least three loud blasts were heard in Kyiv. Ukraine's air force said it intercepted five Iskander short-range ballistic missiles fired at the city. The attack knocked out heating to 630 residential buildings, 16 medical facilities and 30 schools and kindergartens, the city administration said. Falling missile debris caused damage and sparked fires in three districts.

"We ask citizens to immediately respond to reports of ballistic attack threats, because there is very little time to find shelter," the air force said.

During the nearly three years since the war began, Russia has regularly bombarded civilian areas of Ukraine, often in an attempt to cripple the power grid and unnerve Ukrainians. Ukraine, struggling to hold back Russia's bigger army on the front line, has attempted to strike Russian infrastructure supporting the country's war effort.

The falling debris in Kyiv caused damage to around two dozen high-rise office buildings in the city center as well as the landmark Catholic Church of St. Nicholas and the Kyiv National Linguistic University.

What may have been the blast wave from an intercepted low-flying missile also blew out windows and caused other damage at six embassies, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said.

38 people dead, over 100 missing in Congo after ferry capsizes

KINSHASA, Congo (AP)—A ferry overloaded with people returning home for Christmas capsized on the Busira River in northeastern Congo, leaving 38 people confirmed dead and over 100 others missing, officials and eyewitnesses said Saturday. Twenty people have been rescued so far.

The sinking of the ferry late Friday came less than four days after another boat capsized in the country's northeast, killing 25 people.

The ferry was traveling as part of a convoy of other vessels and the passengers were primarily merchants returning home for Christmas, said Joseph Joseph Kangolingoli, the mayor of Ingende, the last town on the river before the site of the accident.

According to Ingende resident Ndolo Kaddy, the ferry contained "more than 400 people because it made two ports, Ingende and Loolo, on the way to Boende, so there is reason to believe there were more deaths."

Congolese officials have often warned against overloading boats and vowed to punish those violating safety measures on rivers. However, in remote areas many people cannot afford public transportation on the few available roads.

At least 78 people drowned in October when an overloaded boat sank in the country's east while 80 lost their lives in a similar accident near Kinshasa in June.

The latest accident prompted anger at the government for not equipping the convoy with flotation devices.

Nesty Bonina, a member of the local government and a prominent figure in Mbandaka, the capital of the Equateur province where the ferry sank, condemned authorities for not properly handling the recent sinkings.

"How can a ship navigate at night under the watchful eye of river service agents? And now we're recording over a hundred deaths," said Bonina.

The capsizing of overloaded boats is becoming increasingly frequent in this central African nation as more people are giving up the few available roads in favor of wooden vessels crumbling under the weight of passengers and their goods for security reasons.

The roads are often caught up in the deadly clashes between Congolese security forces and rebels that sometimes block major access routes.

Life & Style

NORAD's Santa tracker was a Cold War morale boost. Now it attracts millions of kids

By BEN FINLEY
Associated Press

AP

NORAD Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Charles D. Luckey takes a call while volunteering at the NORAD Tracks Santa center at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colo., Dec. 24, 2014.

The Christmas tradition has become nearly global in scope: Children from around the world track Santa Claus as he sweeps across the earth, delivering presents and defying time.

Each year, at least 100,000 kids call into the North American Aerospace Defense Command to inquire about Santa's location. Millions more follow online in nine languages, from English to Japanese.

On any other night, NORAD is scanning the heavens for potential threats, such as last year's Chinese spy balloon. But on Christmas Eve, volunteers in Colorado Springs are fielding questions like, "When is Santa coming to my house?" and, "Am I on the naughty or nice list?"

"There are screams and giggles and laughter," said Bob Sommers, 63, a civilian contractor and NORAD volunteer.

Sommers often says on the call that everyone must be asleep before Santa arrives, prompting parents to say, "Do you hear what he said? We got to go to bed early."

NORAD's annual tracking of Santa has endured since the Cold War, predating ugly sweater parties and Mariah Carey classics. The tradition continues regardless of government shutdowns, such as the one in 2018, and this year.

Here's how it began and why the phones keep ringing.

The origin story is Hollywood-esque

It started with a child's accidental phone call in 1955. The Colorado Springs newspaper printed a Sears advertisement that encouraged children to call Santa, listing a phone number.

A boy called. But he reached the Continental Air Defense Command, now NORAD, a joint U.S. and Canadian effort to spot potential enemy attacks. Tensions were growing with the Soviet Union, along with anxieties about nuclear war.

Air Force Col. Harry W. Shoup picked up an emergency-only "red phone" and was greeted by a tiny voice that began to recite a Christmas wish list.

"He went on a little bit, and he takes a breath, then says, 'Hey, you're not Santa,'" Shoup told The Associated Press in 1999.

Realizing an explanation would be lost on the youngster, Shoup summoned a deep, jolly voice and replied, "Ho, ho, ho! Yes, I am Santa Claus. Have you been a good boy?"

Shoup said he learned from the boy's mother that Sears mistakenly printed the top-secret number. He hung up, but the phone soon rang again with a young girl reciting her Christmas list. Fifty calls a day followed, he said.

In the pre-digital age, the agency used a 60-by-80 foot (18-by-24 meter) plexiglass map of North America to track unidentified objects. A staff member jokingly drew Santa and his sleigh over the North Pole.

The tradition was born.

"Note to the kiddies," began an AP story from Colorado Springs on Dec. 23, 1955. "Santa Claus Friday was assured safe passage into the United States by the Continental Air Defense Command."

In a likely reference to the Soviets, the article noted that Santa was guarded against possible attack from "those who do not believe in Christmas."

Is the origin story humbug?

Some grinchy journalists have nitpicked Shoup's story, questioning whether a misprint or a misdial prompted the boy's call.

In 2014, tech news site Gizmodo cited an International News Service story from Dec. 1, 1955, about a child's call to Shoup. Published in the Pasadena Independent, the article said the child reversed two digits in the Sears number.

"When a childish voice asked COC commander Col. Harry Shoup, if there was a Santa Claus at the North Pole, he answered much more roughly than he should—considering the season:

'There may be a guy called Santa Claus at the North Pole, but he's not the one I worry about coming from that direction,'" Shoup said in the brief piece.

In 2015, The Atlantic magazine doubted the flood of calls to the secret line, while noting that Shoup had a flair for public relations.

Phone calls aside, Shoup was indeed media savvy. In 1986, he told the Scripps Howard News Service that he recognized an opportunity when a staff member drew Santa on the glass map in 1955.

A lieutenant colonel promised to have it erased. But Shoup said, "You leave it right there," and summoned public affairs. Shoup wanted to boost morale for the troops and public alike.

"Why, it made the military look good—like we're not all a bunch of snobs who don't care about Santa Claus," he said.

Shoup died in 2009. His children told the StoryCorps podcast in 2014 that it was a misprinted Sears ad that prompted the phone calls.

"And later in life he got letters from all over the world," said Terri Van Keuren, a daughter. "People saying 'Thank you, Colonel, for having, you know, this sense of humor.'"

A rare addition to Santa's story

NORAD's tradition is one of the few modern additions to the centuries-old Santa story that have endured, according to Gerry Bowler, a Canadian historian who spoke to the AP in 2010.

Ad campaigns or movies try to "kidnap" Santa for commercial purposes, said Bowler, who wrote "Santa Claus: A Biography." NORAD, by contrast, takes an essential element of Santa's story and views it through a technological lens.

In a recent interview with the AP, Air Force Lt. Gen. Case Cunningham explained that NORAD radars in Alaska and Canada—known as the northern warning system—are the first to detect Santa.

He leaves the North Pole and typically heads for the international dateline in the Pacific Ocean. From there he moves west, following the night.

"That's when the satellite systems we use to track and identify targets of interest every single day start to kick in," Cunningham said. "A probably little-known fact is that Rudolph's nose that glows red emanates a lot of heat. And so those satellites track (Santa) through that heat source."

NORAD has an app and website, www.noradsanta.org, that will track Santa on Christmas Eve from 4 a.m. to midnight, mountain standard time. People can call 1-877-HI-NORAD to ask live operators about Santa's location from 6 a.m. to midnight, mountain time.

Best friend is anything but one after wine o'clock

DEAR ABBY: My best friend of 60 years lost her husband 13 years ago. She has one son, who is successful and busy with his young family. They try to include her in various family gatherings, but she always has an excuse as to why she can't attend—she doesn't drive at night, doesn't like their friends, etc.

The truth is, she starts drinking at 2 p.m., and by 4 p.m. she starts sending me rude, hurtful text messages. I have tried ignoring them, not responding, turning off my phone, etc. I know she's lonely, but she blames everything on everyone else and takes no responsibility for her own actions.

I love her but I can't take it anymore. I have talked to her about this, and she just laughs. Then that same afternoon, after a few glasses of wine, she throws it back in my face. Please advise.

OVER IT IN ARIZONA

DEAR OVER IT: By now you should have realized that as much as you would like to, you can't fix what's wrong with your "best friend." Only she can do that by finally admitting she has become an alcoholic and resolving to do something about it. The longer you tolerate her abuse, the longer she'll keep abusing you and herself.

Tell her once and for all that you will no longer allow her to hurt you, and until she demonstrates that she's dealing with her alcohol problem, you want nothing more to do with her. Then step back and block her calls and any other communication. Friends don't treat their best friends the way you are being treated, and you do not have to tolerate it.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I love cats and dogs. We have one of each. Both are indoor pets. My problem is my wife and daughter have filled our home with cat and dog paraphernalia of all shapes and sizes. There are seven dog and cat beds in the master bedroom, five in the spare bedroom, four in our daughter's bedroom, three in the living room and one in the kitchen (because our cat supposedly likes to watch my wife cook).

There are also cat trees scattered about, a four-story cat cage, and cat and dog toys strewn across the floors. There are packets of cat and dog treats everywhere. I just love stepping on them while barefoot at night. Am I unreasonable to suggest that our cat and dog need not be treated like royalty? I suspect they'd be just fine with one bed each—you know, like us humans.

OVERRULED IN CALIFORNIA

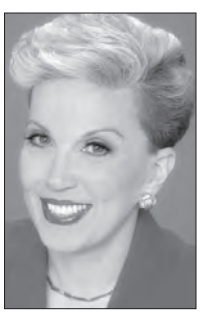
DEAR OVERRULED: It appears your wife and daughter have gone overboard trying to ensure that the furry family members are comfortable. A compromise is definitely in order, particularly regarding areas that YOU spend the most time in—like your bedroom, living room and kitchen. It would also be considerate if someone made sure the floors are cleared of toys and treats before bedtime so you won't be injured on your way to the bathroom.

■■■

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $16 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

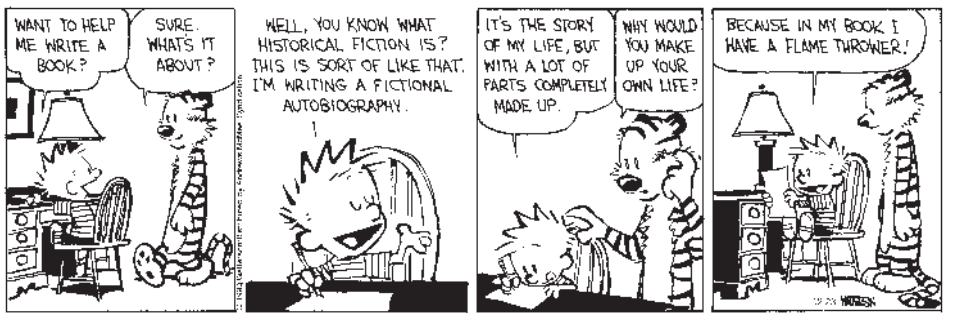


Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


WANT TO HELP ME WRITE A BOOK?
SURE. WHAT'S IT ABOUT?
WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT HISTORICAL FICTION IS? THIS IS SORT OF LIKE THAT. I'M WRITING A FICTIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY.
IT'S THE STORY OF MY LIFE, BUT WITH A LOT OF FARTS COMPLETELY MADE UP.
WHY WOULD YOU MAKE UP YOUR OWN LIFE?
BECAUSE IN MY BOOK I HAVE A FLAME THROWER!

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

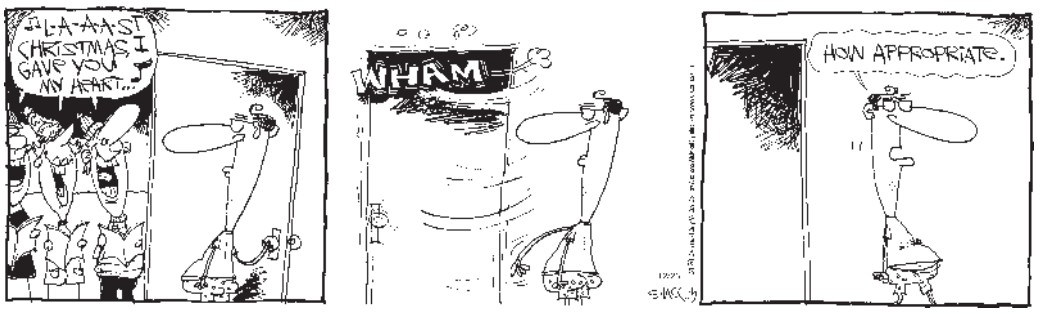
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

WRAPPING PRESENTS IS HARD.
IT IS.
MOM AND KATY ARE SO GOOD AT IT.
LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO MAN'S BEST FRIEND, SON.
YOU MEAN DOGS?
I MEAN GIFT BAGS. POP THAT SUCKER IN HERE.
12-23

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Computer brand
5 Light touch
8 Jr. year exam
12 Smoke an e-cig
13 Chef Garten
14 Cape —, Portugal
15 Warning sign
16 Holiday mantelpiece decor
18 Tot
20 Assault
21 Villain's blemish
23 Pensioned (Abbr.)
24 Amassed
28 Iranian money
31 Compass dir.
32 Anglo- —
34 Pen tip
35 Classic Fords
37 Comedian/actress Janeane
39 Entreat
41 Beget
42 Not digital, as a watch
45 Dancer Glover
49 Lasagna-loving cat
51 Part of Q.E.D.
52 Mine, to Marcel
53 Soccer's Hamm
54 Stadium cheers
55 Thinker Descartes
56 Hog haven
57 Rebuff

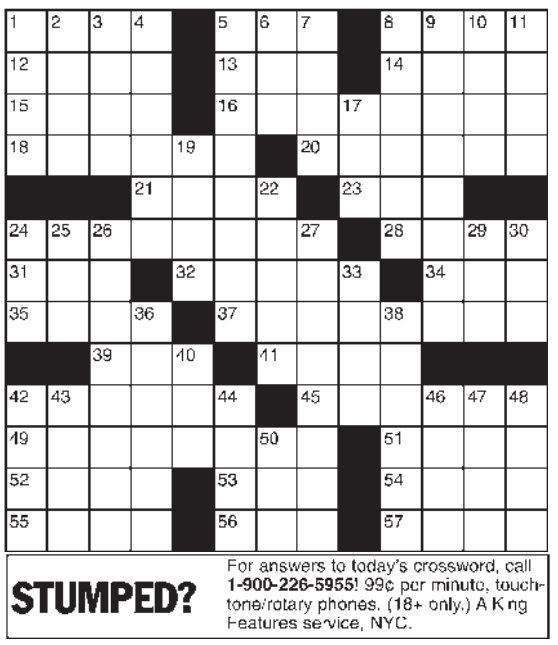
DOWN

1 Acknowledge
2 Showed up
3 Slender weapon
4 Fame
5 Louis Armstrong tune
6 Santa — winds
7 Brazilian rubber
8 Babbling type
9 Short recital piece
10 Outlet letters
11 Chore
17 USPS delivery
19 Highland refusals
22 Austin's state
24 Solidify
25 Busy insect
26 Snoopy's foe
27 "Que Sera, Sera" singer
29 Have a bug
30 Wall St. deal
33 Asta's feeder
36 Arm's-length portrait
38 Flu symptoms
40 ".. grace of God —"
42 Culture medium
43 Christen
44 Jewels
46 Persia, today
47 Honolulu's isle
48 Fed. accident investigator
50 Tipsy

Solution time: 21 mins.

D	A	M		P	A	L	S		C	R	A	M
O	R	A		E	R	I	C		R	E	G	S
H	O	T	T	O	D	D	Y		E	V	E	N
A	D	H	E	R	E		T	I	S			
			D	I	N		H	O	T	D	O	G
P	A	N	D	A		T	E	N		A	D	O
O	B	E	Y		C	V	S		C	L	E	O
S	O	W		G	A	S		A	H	E	A	D
H	O	I	P	O	I		L	V	I			
			R	O	C		E	O	C	E	N	E
C	I	A	O		H	O	T	C	O	C	O	A
A	V	I	V		E	R	I	E		H	A	R
N	E	R	O		R	E	N	T		O	H	S

Last Friday's answer 12-23



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Noel Wells, 38; Eddie Vedder, 60; Susan Lucci, 78; Harry Shearer, 81.

Happy Birthday: Contemplate the consequences before you make a move. Not everything will be as it appears. Change is possible, but you'll have to take care of unfinished business before you press forward. New beginnings await you, and the chance to transform yourself financially and physically is unlimited. Take refuge in your ability to read between the lines and take advantage of what's available. Romance and commitment are apparent. Your numbers are 2, 8, 23, 27, 33, 41, 48.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Charm and offering incentives will help you get your way. Put more force behind the things that motivate and spark your interest. Participate in something that makes you feel good about yourself. Helping others will lead to unexpected opportunities. Leave nothing to chance; be the one to make a difference. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* You may need change, but a premature decision will turn out differently than anticipated. Bide your time and pay attention to detail before you express your ideas, and you'll avoid criticism. Use excess energy to take care of all the little things you've left undone. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Take the reins and move forward. Be aware of the burdens that will unfold due to your actions. How you handle yourself and present what you have to offer will lead to opportunities. Attending networking or social events that mix business with pleasure will pay off. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Money matters, so don't let anyone pressure you to spend impetuously. Have an open mind, and you'll gain insight into what, who and how you can improve yourself, your position and your future. A passionate approach will open doors that lead to new beginnings. ✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Discuss your plans. Attend functions that integrate business with pleasure, and you'll meet a higher-up who shares your ideals and offers information that will help you gain ground. Personal gains are within reach if you follow your heart and share your thoughts. Romance is on the rise. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Say less and do more. Proving yourself is a matter of getting things done, not pontificating. Don't feel obligated to put everyone before your needs. Set boundaries to ensure you have time to reach the demands you put on yourself. A change will encourage you to take the most appealing path. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Raise your profile and grab the attention of someone with something to offer in return. Set the groundwork for what you want to achieve, and the feedback and connections you make will boost your morale and set you on the road to victory. Embrace chance meetings at celebrations with associates. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Keep your thoughts and reactions to yourself. Be an observer, and you'll gain the confidence of those eager to share their inner secrets. Your ability to be a good listener will help you manipulate whatever happens to your advantage. A change of heart will point you in a new direction. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Keep conversations to a minimum. Don't discuss matters that are in limbo. You'll gain the most through your actions and a desire to help others. Join forces with colleagues who want to make a difference in your community, and you'll form a close alliance that will benefit you down the road. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Look around you and establish how to simplify your life. A creative or social diversion will point you in a direction that is engaging both mentally and physically. Reaching out to help others will have its rewards. Update your image, look and appeal, and greater confidence will unfold. ✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Take a different approach with someone pressing your emotional buttons. It isn't in your best interest to unleash your temper. Put your energy into lending a helping hand and deter anyone from trying to make you look bad or upset you. A little love will go a long way. ✪✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Do your part. An act of kindness will make someone's day and make you feel good about yourself. Stick to the script; if you exaggerate, you'll fall short when the time comes to stand behind your promises. Uncertainty will make you appear weak; honesty is always in your best interest. 3 stars

Birthday Baby: You are insightful, opportunistic and charismatic. You are helpful and caring.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	2		9		7	4		
	9	4			1	3		
			4	5			9	7
			3			2		
1		5		4	9	8		
	3	2	5		6	7		
6	5		1	2			7	
9	1			6	4	5		3
2	4							1

Difficulty: ★ 12/23

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Friday's Answer

3	9	7	8	2	6	5	4	1
8	4	2	5	9	1	6	3	7
5	1	6	4	3	7	8	9	2
9	5	3	2	4	8	1	7	6
4	7	8	1	6	5	9	2	3
6	2	1	9	7	3	4	5	8
7	6	4	3	8	9	2	1	5
2	3	5	6	1	4	7	8	9
1	8	9	7	5	2	3	6	4

Difficulty: ★★★★ 12/20

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

HAPPY FESTIVUS Solution: 6 letters

M	E	A	T	L	O	A	F	A	M	I	L	Y	R	H
E	K	I	R	T	S	E	H	T	H	G	I	F	E	T
A	D	N	E	M	A	P	O	P	U	L	A	R	S	G
L	R	R	A	L	E	I	N	A	D	Y	E	I	T	N
S	A	D	E	R	A	H	S	Y	C	L	Y	E	O	E
E	C	T	I	N	F	I	R	G	O	L	R	N	F	R
C	O	I	P	N	N	R	N	P	S	I	R	D	U	T
N	S	N	T	I	E	I	M	E	M	S	E	S	S	S
A	T	S	S	J	R	U	D	D	O	E	M	U	E	F
V	A	E	O	E	N	C	L	O	C	K	I	O	C	O
E	N	L	H	I	U	P	S	O	N	G	R	Y	U	S
I	Z	T	M	U	S	I	C	I	D	E	A	O	L	T
R	A	U	S	A	M	T	S	I	R	H	C	J	A	A
G	L	F	A	L	S	E	I	N	F	E	L	D	R	E
A	L	L	I	N	C	L	U	S	I	V	E	K	A	F

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All-inclusive, Aluminum Pole, Card, Christmas, Clock, Cosmo, Costanza, Daniel, Dine, Dinner, Elaine, Fake, False, Family, Feats of Strength, Fight, Frank, Friends, Gathering, Grievances, Host, Idea, Jerry, Joyous, Meal, Meatloaf, Merry, Miracle, Music, Popular, Rest of Us, Script, Secular, Seinfeld, Shared, Silly, Song, The Strike, Tinsel

Last Friday's answer : Secure

The NEW Volume 77 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com. or call 1-800-642-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Mahomes throws for TD, runs for score as Chiefs beat Texans

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—Patrick Mahomes knew he could run on the ankle he sprained last week. The bigger concern for the Chiefs quarterback was how he would stop, when all the weight and pressure and momentum would land squarely upon it.

The solution against Houston was simple: Mahomes didn't stop.

The two-time MVP kept chugging forward until he plowed into the end zone on a 15-yard scramble to cap the Chiefs' opening drive on Saturday. Mahomes proceeded to throw for 260 yards and another score, never once looking troubled by his ailing ankle, and led Kansas City to a 27-19 victory that put the Chiefs on the brink of the No. 1 seed in the AFC playoffs.

The Chiefs (14-1) can clinch the postseason bye and home-field advantage if Buffalo loses to or ties New England on Sunday. If the Bills win, Kansas City can wrap it up by beating Pittsburgh on Christmas Day—its third game in an 11-day span.

"I ask a lot from the guys around me. I feel like if I'm going to ask them to play through pain and nicks and bruises, I've got to do it as well," Mahomes said. "That's something that I pride myself on is being out there with my guys."

Xavier Worthy had seven catches for 65 yards and a touchdown, Kareem Hunt ran for 55 yards and another score, and Marquise Brown had five catches for 45 yards for Kansas City in his first game this season after recovering from a shoulder injury.

The result was what Chiefs coach Andy Reid called his team's most comprehensive performance of the season.

As for Mahomes?

"He spoils the dog out of us, he's so tough," Reid said. "You get used to it. But most guys don't come back from that like he did."

AP

Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes drops back to pass during the first half of an NFL football game against the Houston Texans Saturday, Dec. 21, 2024, in Kansas City, Mo.

C.J. Stroud threw for 244 yards and two touchdowns with two interceptions for Houston (9-6), and one of those TD throws came at a great expense. Tank Dell, who had six catches for 98 yards, sustained a devastating knee injury on the play and was taken to the University of Kansas Medical Center, where Texans coach DeMeco Ryans said he would remain overnight.

"All our thoughts and prayers are with Tank right now. You see what he means to our entire team," Ryans said. "It hurts to see him go down like that. He was having a fantastic game, playing really well for us."

Stroud was visibly shaken by the injury and had to be consoled by teammates on the sideline.

"I mean, all you can really do is pray," he said.

There were questions early in the week about whether Mahomes, who has a history of ankle injuries, would play at all after he sustained a high ankle sprain late in last week's win over Cleveland. But he was off the injury report by Friday, and he was on the field and leading the Chiefs to a touchdown on their opening possession.

His scramble for a score was merely the start of a back-and-forth first half.

RAVENS 34, STEELERS 17

BALTIMORE (AP)—Lamar Jackson threw three touchdown passes and Marlon Humphrey scored on a fourth-quarter interception return to help Baltimore pull even with Pittsburgh atop the AFC North with a victory over the Steelers.

Pittsburgh (10-5) would have clinched the division with a victory, but now the teams are deadlocked after the Ravens (10-5) won for just the second time in the last 10 games in this series. Baltimore clinched a playoff berth. The Steelers had already done so.

Russell Wilson threw two touchdown passes, the second of which tied the game at 17 with 5:14 left in the third quarter. Jackson answered with a 7-yard scoring strike to Mark Andrews, and after Pittsburgh turned the ball over on downs, a 44-yard run by Derrick Henry put the Ravens in the red zone.

That drive came to nothing when Jackson was intercepted for just the fourth time this season, but then Humphrey picked off Wilson and went 37 yards to the end zone to give Baltimore a cushion in a series that's been razor-thin of late. The previous nine games between the Steelers and Ravens were decided by seven points or fewer.

Jackson improved to 2-4 against Pittsburgh as a starter. This was his first time facing the Steelers at home since 2020.

CHARGERS 34, BRONCOS 27

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP)—Trailing 21-13 at halftime Thursday night against the Denver Broncos, some wondered if the Los Angeles Chargers had any resolve left after going through their worst four-quarter stretch of the season.

The Chargers put some doubts to rest getting back on track and getting closer to wrapping up a playoff spot.

Justin Herbert passed for 284 yards and two touchdowns, including a go-ahead 19-yarder to Derius Davis early in the fourth quarter, as the Chargers rallied for a 34-27 victory.

Los Angeles (9-6) has a 97% probability of making the playoffs with the win according to the NFL. It can wrap up its second postseason berth in three seasons Sunday with losses by Indianapolis and Miami.

"It was a total team effort by everyone. It was phenomenal," coach Jim Harbaugh said. "The test and challenge is how you are going to respond. They went back to work and stayed the course."

The Chargers' comeback also included Cameron Dicker making the first successful fair-catch kick in the NFL in 48 years. He was good from 57 yards on the final play of the first half to pull the Chargers to 21-13.

Denver (9-6) could have clinched a playoff spot but had its four-game winning streak snapped. The Broncos still have an 85% chance of making it, but they have tough remaining tests at Cincinnati on Dec. 28 and at home against Kansas City in Week 18.

Taking advantage of an obscure rule, Chargers' Dicker makes NFL's first fair-catch kick in 48 years

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP)—Of all the rules in football, Jim Harbaugh considers the obscure fair-catch kick to be his favorite.

The Los Angeles Chargers coach had the opportunity to try one Thursday night for only the second time in his career.

This time, his kicker got three points from one of the most unusual plays in the sport.

Cameron Dicker made the first successful fair-catch kick in the NFL since 1976, connecting from 57 yards right before halftime against the Denver Broncos.

"I've been trying to get one of those every game. Cam Dicker stepped up and made it. It was huge and got the momentum back," Harbaugh said.

Those points began the Chargers' comeback as they rallied for a 34-27 victory, finishing the game on a 24-6 run.

For football obsessives like Harbaugh who relish oddities and unprecedented feats, Dicker's kick was delightful.

The seldom-used rule allows a team that has just made a fair catch to try a free kick for three points. The kick is attempted from the line of scrimmage, and the defenders all must stand 10 yards away.

The play hardly ever happens because teams almost never find themselves in circumstances to make such a kick feasible. Only five NFL teams had previously tried the kick in the 21st century, and nobody had successfully executed it since Ray Wersching did it for the San Diego Chargers 48 years ago.

"It's cool. I didn't know that was the case," Dicker said about accomplishing the rare milestone. "It was fun to go out there. It was fun to be in that scenario. With the penalty, I thought it would happen."

The Chargers seized the opportunity created when Denver's Tremon Smith committed fair-catch interference on what would have been the final play of the first half when Los Angeles' Derius Davis attempted to field a punt at the Chargers 38.

Smith said he was "well aware" of the fair-catch kick rule when the Chargers subsequently lined up for it.

"I've been playing a long time," Smith added. "It's just a dumb penalty. ... The returner did a good job of selling it. He knows he's running into me, even though he wasn't going to catch the ball. But like I said, dumb penalty."

The flag moved the ball to the Denver 47 for an untimed down, and Harbaugh took a timeout before electing to try the fair-catch kick.

With J.K. Scott holding the ball, Dicker comfortably booted it through the uprights.

Dicker said special teams coach Ryan Ficken goes over the play often during the season, and that they practice it sometimes on Fridays. Harbaugh also credited Ficken, who brought it up again during the meetings leading up to this game.

"Looking over at (Denver's) sideline, it was funny. They were confused what was going on. We talk about it every week, so it was normal for us," Dicker said.

Plenty of the Broncos said they actually knew what was happening, and they were disappointed to be on the wrong side of history.

"It's something we talk about in our special teams group, and it's one of those situations you go through in training camp," Denver receiver Marvin Mims said. "So we all knew what was going to happen, and they executed to perfection."

Dicker's 57-yarder also was the longest fair-catch kick in NFL history, besting Paul Hornung's 52-yarder for Green Bay in 1964.

The most recent fair-catch kick in the NFL was attempted in 2019, when Carolina's Joey Slye missed from 60 yards in a game played in London.

Harbaugh also attempted it with the San Francisco 49ers in 2013, but Phil Dawson missed from 71 yards right before halftime.

"I wanted it so bad that I tried it," Harbaugh said when looking back. "I was really happy, too, because Coach Ficken went over it this week. We took a timeout and got things dialed in. It was going to be on their side of the 50. It was our chance."

The play is extremely rare because most fair catches occur well outside of normal field goal range. The Broncos' punt would have stranded the Chargers beyond Dicker's considerable range, but Smith's penalty created a rare opportunity — and Dicker didn't miss.

"I was definitely confused," Chargers edge rusher Joey Bosa said. "I was ready to get in the locker room, but I'm happy we had a shot. I was just joking that you can play for 20 years and still have no idea what's going on on the field. So it was a good moment. It was an important swing in momentum."

Wersching, who kicked for the Chargers and 49ers during 15 NFL seasons, made a 45-yard fair-catch kick at the halftime gun for San Diego against Buffalo on Nov. 21, 1976.

"It doesn't happen much," Denver coach Sean Payton said. "We practice it all the time. In that situation, the penalty put them in field goal position, so it's disappointing."

Lakers sweep 2-game set against Kings with a win

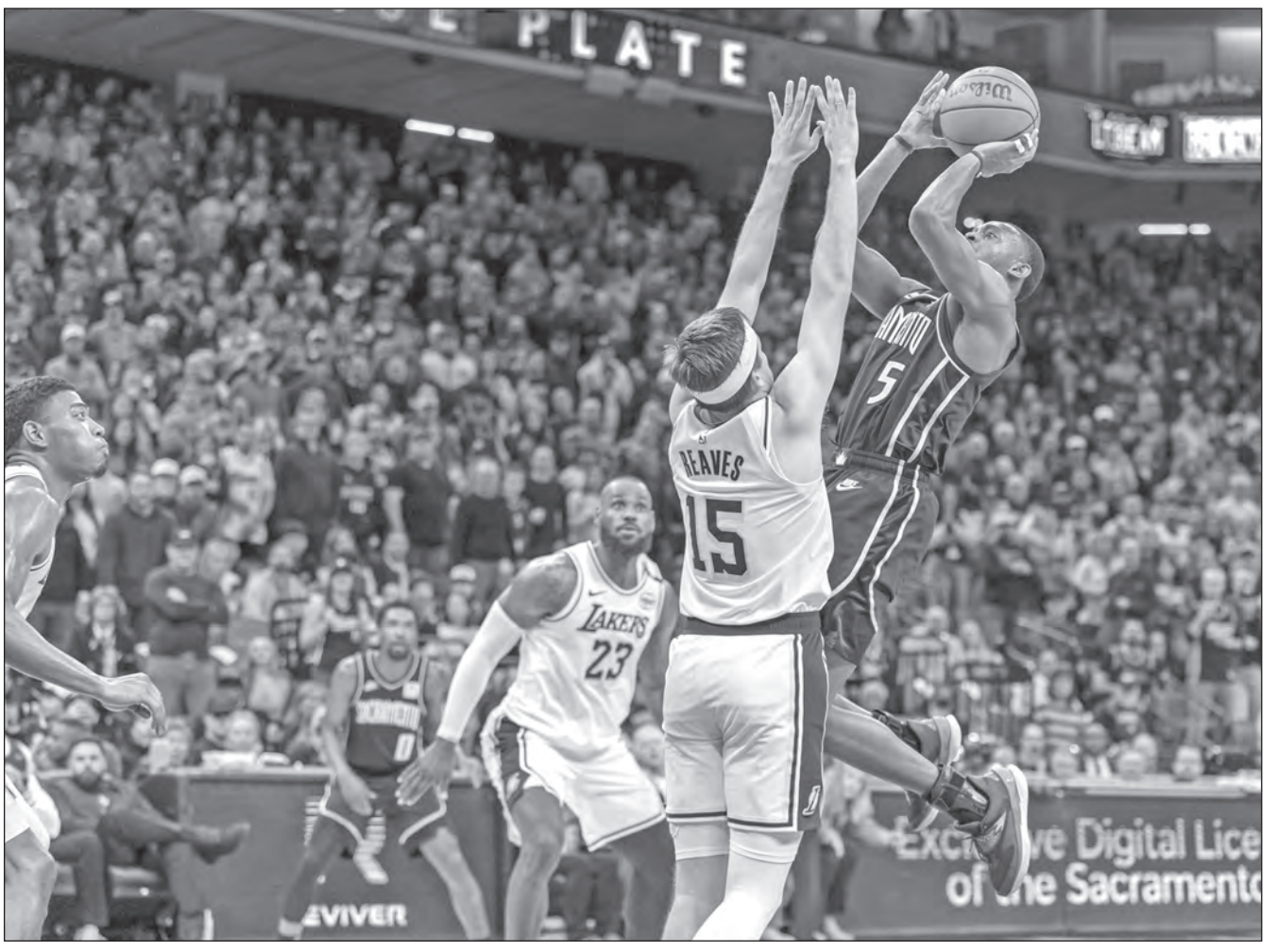
SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—LeBron James had 32 points and the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Sacramento Kings 103-99 to sweep a two-game set on Saturday.

Trailing 101-99 with 12 seconds left, the Kings had a chance to tie after Anthony Davis missed two free throws but squandered the opportunity after they couldn't secure the rebound. Austin Reaves was fouled and made both free throws to put the game away.

Reaves finished with 16 points, and Davis had 10 points and 15 rebounds as the Lakers completed the sweep after beating the Kings 113-100 on Thursday.

De'Aaron Fox led Sacramento with 31 points. Domantas Sabonis had 19 points and 19 rebounds, and DeMar DeRozan added 12 points for the Kings.

Davis earned his 642nd block and passed Kobe Bryant for the fifth most in franchise history.



AP

Sacramento Kings guard De'Aaron Fox (5) attempts a shot over Los Angeles Lakers guard Austin Reaves (15) during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Saturday, Dec. 21, 2024, in Sacramento, Calif.

MAGIC 121, HEAT 114

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Cole Anthony scored 27 of his 35 points in the second half and Orlando tied their largest comeback in franchise history to beat Miami after trailing by 25 points.

The Magic also trailed by 22 entering the fourth quarter before outscoring the Heat 37-8. Their 25-point comeback ties a mark set on Nov. 8, 1989 against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Anthony also had eight rebounds and nine assists. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 24 points and Goga Bitadze added 18 points and 13 rebounds for the Magic, who lost center Mo Wagner to a knee injury in the first quarter and center Wendell Carter Jr. to an ejection before halftime.

Bam Adebayo and Terry Rozier led Miami with 23 points each, and Tyler Herro added 22.

GRIZZLIES 128, HAWKS 112

ATLANTA (AP)—Desmond Bane scored 23 points and Memphis, without star player Ja Morant, beat skidding Atlanta.

Scotty Pippen Jr. added 22 points and nine assists. Morant, who injured his back in the Grizzlies' Dec. 19 win over Golden State, was ruled out with low back soreness before Saturday night's game.

De'Andre Hunter led Atlanta with 26 points and Jalen Johnson added 13 points and 11 rebounds.

The Hawks were also without their own star in Trae Young, who was ruled out before the game with a right heel contusion. After winning its first three games in December, Atlanta has now lost four of its last five games.

JAZZ 105, NETS 94

NEW YORK (AP)—Lauri Markkanen scored 21 points, Collin Sexton and Svi Mykhailiuk each had 18 points, and Utah beat Brooklyn.

The Jazz, who at 7-20 have one of the worst records in the NBA, have now won consecutive games for the first time this season. They beat the Pistons 126-119 on Thursday.

Both victories have come on the road, where they improved to 5-20.

John Collins finished with 13 points and 11 rebounds while Jordan Clarkson chipped in 16 points for a struggling Utah team that had lost 12 of its previous 15 games.

Cam Johnson had 18 points and Ben Simmons added 15 points and 10 assists for the Nets, who have lost seven of their last nine.

CAVALIERS 126, 76ERS 99

CLEVELAND (AP) — Darius Garland scored 26 points and Evan Mobley had 22 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists, sending NBA-leading Cleveland to a victory over Philadelphia.

Donovan Mitchell had 19 points and Georges Niang added 13 points off the bench for Cleveland, which is 25-4 for the top record in the league.

The Cavaliers tied their season high with 22 3-pointers—Garland made 6 of 7—and improved to an NBA-best 16-1 at home.

Tyrese Maxey scored 13 of his 27 points in the third quarter and Paul George had 11 points for Philadelphia. Kelly Oubre Jr. had nine points, but the 76ers were outscored by 34 in his 27 minutes.

CELTICS 123, BULLS 98

CHICAGO (AP)—Jayson Tatum scored a season-high 43 points, grabbed 16 rebounds and dished out 10 assists for his third career triple-double and Boston beat Chicago.

Kristaps Porzingis scored 22 points and Jaylen Brown added 19 to help the Celtics rebound from a 117-108 loss to the Bulls in Boston on Thursday night.

Tatum, the five-time All-Star, scored 18 points in the third quarter as Boston used a 19-8 run to open a 93-77 lead heading into the fourth.

Nikola Vucevic scored 19 points and 10 assists to lead the Bulls, whose season-high three-game winning streak ended. Zach LaVine, Coby White and Patrick Williams had 14 points each.

BUCKS 112, WIZARDS 101

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Bobby Portis replaced Giannis Antetokounmpo in the starting lineup and scored a season-high 34 points, leading Milwaukee to a victory over Washington.

Khris Middleton had 18 points, six rebounds and eight assists for the Bucks, while Portis finished with 10 rebounds and eight assists.

Antetokounmpo (back spasms) missed his third game of the season and the Bucks also played again without Damian Lillard (right calf strain) after winning the NBA Cup earlier this week.

Milwaukee coach Doc Rivers said Lillard could play Monday against Chicago.

Rookie Ryan Rollins started at point guard in Lillard's absence and contributed 14 points in 31 minutes. Center Brook Lopez also had 14 and Gary Trent Jr. had 15 points and seven rebounds.

WARRIORS 113, TIMBERWOLVES 13

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Stephen Curry scored 11 straight points in the fourth quarter and 31 for the night as Golden State beat Minnesota.

Trayce Jackson-Davis had 15 points and nine rebounds, while Brandin Podziemski had 12 and Curry — who made seven 3-pointers—added 10 assists for the Warriors.

Anthony Edwards and Donte DiVincenzo led Minnesota with 19 points apiece. Rudy Gobert had 18 points and 12 boards for Minnesota.

Curry hit three 3-pointers and a pair of free throws in a 90-second span that helped the Warriors pull away after blowing a 21-point first-half lead.

KNICKS 104, PELICANS 93

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Jalen Brunson scored 29 of his season-high 39 points in the second half to power New York to a victory over New Orleans.

All-NBA defensive player Herb Jones pressured Brunson in the first half, picking him up at three-quarters court. That pressure led to the Knicks' 35.6% shooting in the first half, when New Orleans held a 49-45 lead.

But Brunson caught fire in the third quarter, scoring 16 points, including 13 straight, in a 22-6 run that erased a 65-52 deficit and gave New York a 74-71 lead. Brunson scored nine of the Knicks' first 13 points of the fourth quarter to extend the lead to 95-81.

New Orleans, which lost for the 15th time in its last 16 games, was paced by Trey Murphy III with 26 points. Dejounte Murray added 14 points for New Orleans.

The Knicks also got 18 points from Mikal Bridges and 16 from OG Anunoby.

MAVERICKS 113, CLIPPERS 97

DALLAS (AP)—Quentin Grimes scored 20 points off the bench, 14 in the fourth quarter, leading eight Mavericks in double figures as Dallas beat Los Angeles despite missing leading scorer Luka Doncic.

Doncic, fifth in the NBA with 28.9 points per game, missed his second consecutive game with a left heel contusion.

Klay Thompson scored 16 points, and Kyrie Irving and Spencer Dinwiddie had 15 apiece.

Norman Powell scored 28 points for the Clippers, who split a two-game series at Dallas. James Harden and Kevin Porter Jr. each added 19.

The Mavericks outscored the Clippers 31-18 in the second period to lead 54-40 at halftime, outshooting them 47.8% to 22.2%.

SPURS 114, TRAIL BLAZERS 94

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Victor Wembanyama scored 30 points and tied a career high with 10 blocks as San Antonio rolled to a victory against Portland.

Wembanyama added seven rebounds while sitting out the final 8 1/2 minutes of the fourth quarter with San Antonio headed to its largest margin of victory this season.

Wembanyama is the first player with four 3-pointers and 10 blocks in a game in NBA history and the first player under 21 with multiple games with double-figure blocks since the league began keeping track of blocks in 1974.

Charles Bassey added 16 points and 12 rebounds and Devin Vassell had 11 points for the Spurs, who have won four straight against the Trail Blazers.

Shaedon Sharpe scored 25 points and Anfernee Simons had 18 points for Portland.

PISTONS 133, SUNS 125

PHOENIX (AP)—Cade Cunningham scored 28 points and had 13 assists, Jalen Duren added 17 points and 11 rebounds and Detroit beat Phoenix.

The Pistons dominated the majority of the game and didn't trail after the first few minutes. The Suns cut their deficit to 122-119 with 2:26 left on a pair of free throws by Kevin Durant, but Malik Beasley responded with a corner 3 to thwart the comeback attempt.

Durant scored a season-high 43 points on 14-of-26 shooting and made all 11 of his free throws. Bradley Beal added 26, but the Suns couldn't overcome 19 turnovers.

Seven Detroit players scored in double figures. Jaden Ivey had 20, Beasley added 18 and Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 16.

Detroit jumped out to a 41-26 lead by the end of the first quarter, scoring 16 points off of seven Phoenix turnovers. The Suns cut the margin to 64-59 by halftime.

Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson, baseball's stolen base king, has died at 65

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP)—Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson, the brash speedster who shattered stolen base records and redefined baseball's leadoff position, has died. He was 65.

Henderson died on Friday. The Athletics said Saturday they were "shocked and heartbroken by his passing," but did not specify a cause of death.

Known as baseball's "Man of Steal," Henderson had a lengthy list of accolades and accomplishments over his nomadic 25-year career—an MVP, 10 All-Star selections, two World Series titles and a Gold Glove award.

"Rickey was simply the best player I ever played with. He could change the outcome of a game in so many ways," said Don Mattingly, Henderson's teammate with the New York Yankees from 1985-89. "It puts a smile on my face just thinking about him. I will miss my friend."

It was stealing bases where Henderson made his name and dominated the sport like no other.

He broke through with 100 steals in his first full season in the majors in 1980, topping Ty Cobb's AL single-season record with Billy Martin's "Billy Ball" Oakland Athletics. He barely slowed playing for nine franchises over the next two decades. He broke Lou Brock's single-season record of 118 by stealing 130 bases in 1982 and led the league in steals for seven straight seasons and 12 overall.

Henderson surpassed Brock's career record when he stole his 939th base on May 1, 1991, for Oakland, and famously pulled third base out of the ground and showed it off to the adoring crowd before giving a speech that he capped by saying: "Lou Brock was a great base stealer, but today I am the greatest of all time."

Henderson finished his career with 1,406 steals. His 468-steal edge over Brock matches the margin between Brock and Jimmy Rollins, who is in 46th place with 470.

"He's the greatest leadoff hitter of all time, and I'm not sure there's a close second," former A's executive Billy Beane said of Henderson.

AP

Former Oakland Athletics player Rickey Henderson looks on before a baseball game between the Athletics and the Texas Rangers in Oakland, Calif., Sept. 25, 2024.

In September, Henderson insisted he would have had many more steals in his career and in the record-breaking 1982 season if rules introduced in 2023 to limit pickoff throws and increase the size of bases had overlapped with his career.

"If I was playing today, I would get 162, right now, without a doubt," he said. "Because if they had had that rule, you can only throw over there twice, you know how many times they would be throwing over there twice and they'd be going, 'Ah, (shoot), can y'all send him to third? Give him two bases and send him to third.' That would be me."

He even predicted how he could still be stealing more bases than the current major leaguers even 20-plus years post-retirement: "If they're stealing 40-50 bases right now I'd lead the league."

Henderson's accomplishment that record-breaking day in 1991 was slightly overshadowed that night when Nolan Ryan threw his record seventh career no-hitter. Henderson already had been Ryan's 5,000th career strikeout victim, which led him to say, "If you haven't been struck out by Nolan Ryan, you're nobody."

That was clearly not the case for Henderson. He is also the career leader in runs scored with 2,295 and in leadoff home runs with 81, ranks second to Barry Bonds with 2,190 walks and is fourth in games played (3,081) and plate appearances (13,346). He finished his career with 3,055 hits over 25 seasons spent with Oakland, the Yankees, Toronto, San Diego, Anaheim, the New York Mets, Seattle, Boston and the Los Angeles Dodgers.

He fittingly finished his career with the Dodgers at age 44 in 2003 by scoring a run in his final play on a major league field.

Henderson is the third prominent baseball Hall of Famer with ties to the Bay Area who died this year, following the deaths in June of former Giants stars Willie Mays and Orlando Cepeda.

Henderson was the rare position player who hit from the right side and threw with his left arm—but then again, everything about Henderson was unique.

He batted out of an extreme crouch, making for a tighter strike zone that contributed to his high walk total. He struck fear in opponents with his aggressive leads off first, his fingers twitching between his legs inside his batting gloves as he eyed the pitcher and the next base.

Born on Christmas Day in 1958 in Chicago in the back of his parents' Chevy, Henderson grew up in Oakland and developed into a star athlete. He played baseball, basketball and football at Oakland Tech High School and was a highly sought-after football recruit who could have played tailback at Southern California—where he likely would have eventually had the chance to run alongside football Hall of Famer Marcus Allen.

But Henderson said his mother loved baseball and thought it would be the safer career in a decision that proved to be prescient.

"She didn't want her baby to get hurt," Henderson told the San Francisco Chronicle in 2019. "I was mad, but she was smart. Overall, with the career longevity and the success I had, she made the right decision. Some of the players in football now have short careers and they can barely move around when they're done."

Henderson was selected in the fourth round of the 1976 amateur draft by the hometown A's and made his big league debut in 1979 with two hits—and, of course, one stolen base.

He became a star for the A's the following season and remained in Oakland through 1984 before being traded to the Yankees. Henderson was part of some talented teams in New York that never made the postseason. In 1985, he scored 146 runs in 143 games to go along with a league-leading 80 steals and 24 homers, helping start the "80-20 club" that season with Cincinnati's Eric Davis.

Henderson was traded back to Oakland in June 1989, leading to his greatest successes. He topped the AL that season with 113 runs, 126 walks and 77 steals, was named the ALCS MVP and helped lead the A's to the World Series title in the earthquake-interrupted Bay Bridge series by sweeping the Giants.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES
NBA STANDINGS
EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlantic Division				
Boston	22	6	.786	–
New York	18	10	.643	4
Brooklyn	11	17	.393	11
Philadelphia	9	17	.346	12
Toronto	7	21	.250	15
Southeast Division				
Orlando	18	12	.600	–
Miami	13	13	.500	3
Atlanta	14	15	.483	3½
Charlotte	7	21	.250	10
Washington	4	22	.154	12
Central Division				
Cleveland	25	4	.862	–
Milwaukee	15	12	.556	9
Indiana	13	15	.464	11½
Chicago	13	16	.448	12
Detroit	12	17	.414	13
WESTERN CONFERENCE				
Southwest Division				
Memphis	20	9	.690	–
Houston	18	9	.667	1
Dallas	18	10	.643	1½
San Antonio	15	13	.536	4½
New Orleans	5	24	.172	15
Northwest Division				
Oklahoma City	22	5	.815	–
Denver	14	11	.560	7
Minnesota	14	13	.519	8
Portland	9	19	.321	13½
Utah	7	20	.259	15
Pacific Division				
L.A. Lakers	16	12	.571	–
Golden State	15	12	.556	½
L.A. Clippers	16	13	.552	½
Phoenix	14	13	.519	1½
Sacramento	13	16	.448	3½

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES
NFL STANDINGS
AMERICAN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
East						
y-Buffalo	11	3	0	.786	445	310
Miami	6	8	0	.429	276	312
e-N.Y. Jets	4	10	0	.286	283	325
e-New England	3	11	0	.214	238	337
South						
y-Houston	9	6	0	.600	347	327
Indianapolis	6	8	0	.429	280	329
e-Jacksonville	3	11	0	.214	263	377
e-Tennessee	3	11	0	.214	254	379
North						
x-Baltimore	10	5	0	.667	452	349
x-Pittsburgh	10	5	0	.667	353	299
Cincinnati	6	8	0	.429	399	387
e-Cleveland	3	11	0	.214	239	356
West						
y-Kansas City	14	1	0	.933	356	278
Denver	9	6	0	.600	363	281
L.A. Chargers	9	6	0	.600	328	274
e-Las Vegas	2	12	0	.143	245	376
NATIONAL CONFERENCE						
East						
x-Philadelphia	12	2	0	.857	369	247
Washington	9	5	0	.643	396	315
Dallas	6	8	0	.429	298	380
e-N.Y. Giants	2	12	0	.143	208	328
South						
Tampa Bay	8	6	0	.571	403	326
Atlanta	7	7	0	.500	293	342
New Orleans	5	9	0	.357	309	312
e-Carolina	3	11	0	.214	247	418
North						
x-Detroit	12	2	0	.857	459	282
x-Minnesota	12	2	0	.857	369	252
Green Bay	10	4	0	.714	379	287
e-Chicago	4	10	0	.286	266	308
West						
L.A. Rams	8	6	0	.571	310	338
Seattle	8	6	0	.571	315	313
Arizona	7	7	0	.500	314	306
San Francisco	6	8	0	.429	314	320

e-Eliminated from playoffs | x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division

AGAPE

From page 16

ACS 1 repeated as the champions after claiming the 2023-2024 title, and this time, their second team made it to the podium after falling short last season.

ACS 1 bested their sister team ACS 2 in the finals after they won the boys doubles, boys singles, and girls singles. Since they won all three straight events, they did not need to play the last two events which were the girls doubles and mixed doubles, and were crowned the champions.

In the overall team standings ACS 1 wrapped up the finals with 20 points; second place ACS 2 collected 14 points; third place Grace Christian Academy 1 claimed eight points; Tanapag Middle School and Saipan International School both had four points; and GCA 2 had zero.

ACS 1 included Elim Luo, Rebecca Wu, Andy Chen, Benjamin Cai, and Tom Chen; while ACS 2 was made up of Tina Hu, Angel Hu, Daniel Huang, Lucas Yang, Scott Li, and Scott Shi.

Third place GCA 1 consisted of Breanna Lopez, Keala Takeda, Kate Xu, Cody Park, Minato Takahashi, David Zheng, Zabdiel Ong, and Eric Li.

ACS administrator and coach Kok H. Pang said after the championships, that winning both gold and silver was unexpected. He said that the teams benefited from the coaches and have been training like other schools with national players. "That helped a lot… we have better privileges because we have a gym to train in, so we can play almost every day except Sundays."

He added, "My students really wanted to win and to play well, but the other schools really gave us a fight too. GCA really improved this year."

His players, who he said are not U.S. citizens, hopefully can help improve the level of play and challenge the other student athletes in the community. "This will improve the standard of badminton in this place," he said.

He then thanked PSS Athletics for organizing the tournament with the Northern Marianas Badminton Association, and Christie Villaflor, Nate Guerrero, and Janelle Pangelinan, for working hard to make it possible.

BASA

From page 16

to the field they play their softball games in.

BASA president Leo Bobai, vice president McQueen Masaharu, board secretary Oly Fritz, board treasurer Hector Efraim, secretary Elsie Ngewakl, and treasurer Timberley Ngewakl turned over the check to DMS principal James Sablan.

In the recently concluded 2024 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association Men's Slow Pitch Open League, Just4Fun won the championships and the runner-up was The Kliq.

The 2025 BASA Masters and Women's league is slated to start in February. The maximum is 10 men's teams and six women's teams.

Mahomes throws for TD, runs for score as Chiefs beat Texans

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson, baseball's stolen base king, has died at 65

PAGE 15

Agape finishes 1-2 in MS badminton

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Agape Christian School's shuttlers emerged as the No. 1 and No. 2 teams following the championships of the 2024-2025 PSS-NMBA Interscholastic Co-ed Middle School Badminton League, held last Dec 14 at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

See AGAPE on Page 15

NMBA

Top 3, including first place Agape Christian School 1, center, second place ACS 2, far right, and third place Grace Christian Academy 1, pose for a group photo during the awards ceremony of the 2024-2025 PSS-NMBA Interscholastic Co-ed Middle School Badminton League, held last Dec 14 at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

NMBA

Agape Christian School players in action during the 2025 PSS-NMBA Interscholastic Co-ed Middle School Badminton League, last Dec 14 at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association's Elsie Ngewakl (secretary), Leo Bobai (president), Hector Efraim (board treasurer), James Sablan (Dandan Middle School principal), McQueen Masaharu (vice president), Timberly Ngewakl (treasurer), and Oly Fritz (board secretary) pose for a photo after BASA's donation of $500 to DMS last Monday.

BASA donates $500 to DMS

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association donated $500 to Dandan Middle School last Monday.

DMS thanked BASA for their continued partnership and their generous Educational Tax Credit donation.

The donation, which BASA does before and after their leagues, is for showing their appreciation to the school, which is adjacent

See BASA on Page 15

Tania Tan breaks 10K PB again

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tania Tan, right, runs alongside a fellow runner in the Start to Park 10K in the 2024 Honolulu Marathon in Honolulu, Hawaii last Dec. 8.

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Tania Tan, multi-medalist and record-breaker, has broken her personal best once again in the 10K race of the Start to Park 10K in the 2024 Honolulu Marathon in Honolulu, Hawaii last Dec. 8.

The 23-year-old restarted her PB after she finished the course with a time of 36:46, which was good enough for fifth place overall out of 6,085 participants in the women's division of the 10K.

First place was Gracelyn Larkin at 33:32; second was Annika Reiss just seconds behind with a time of 33:39; third went to Regan Yee at 33:55; and fourth was Noreen Arima at 34:47.

The 2024 Honolulu Marathon set a new participation record, with over 35,000 entrants across its events, including the marathon, Start to Park 10K, and Kalakaua Merrie Mile.

Tan said that this was her first race she's done in a while. "I was mostly just focusing on getting stronger as a runner this fall. I wanted to do it because I've never done it before and I just thought why not. It's at the end of the year so I might as well race one last time in 2024."

As for her time and breaking her PB, she said she was surprised. "My goal was actually sub-38 minutes but I somehow ran sub-37 minutes. My old PR was only two seconds slower (36:48) but that was on a track (flat) in much cooler and less humid weather in California."

The conditions in Hawaii that morning, she said, was pretty nice. "Really humid (89% humidity that morning) but no winds which I think helped. I was also surprised to come in the Top 5 overall for the women's category."

She then said, "I am especially grateful for my friend Jacob Melnick who ran the whole race with me (even though he's way faster), my training partner Kathryn Watt back in Hawaii, and everyone else in Kaka'ako Run Club."